INAUGURAL HIJINKS: LEFTIES SULK, CLINTON HATERS HOWL ...

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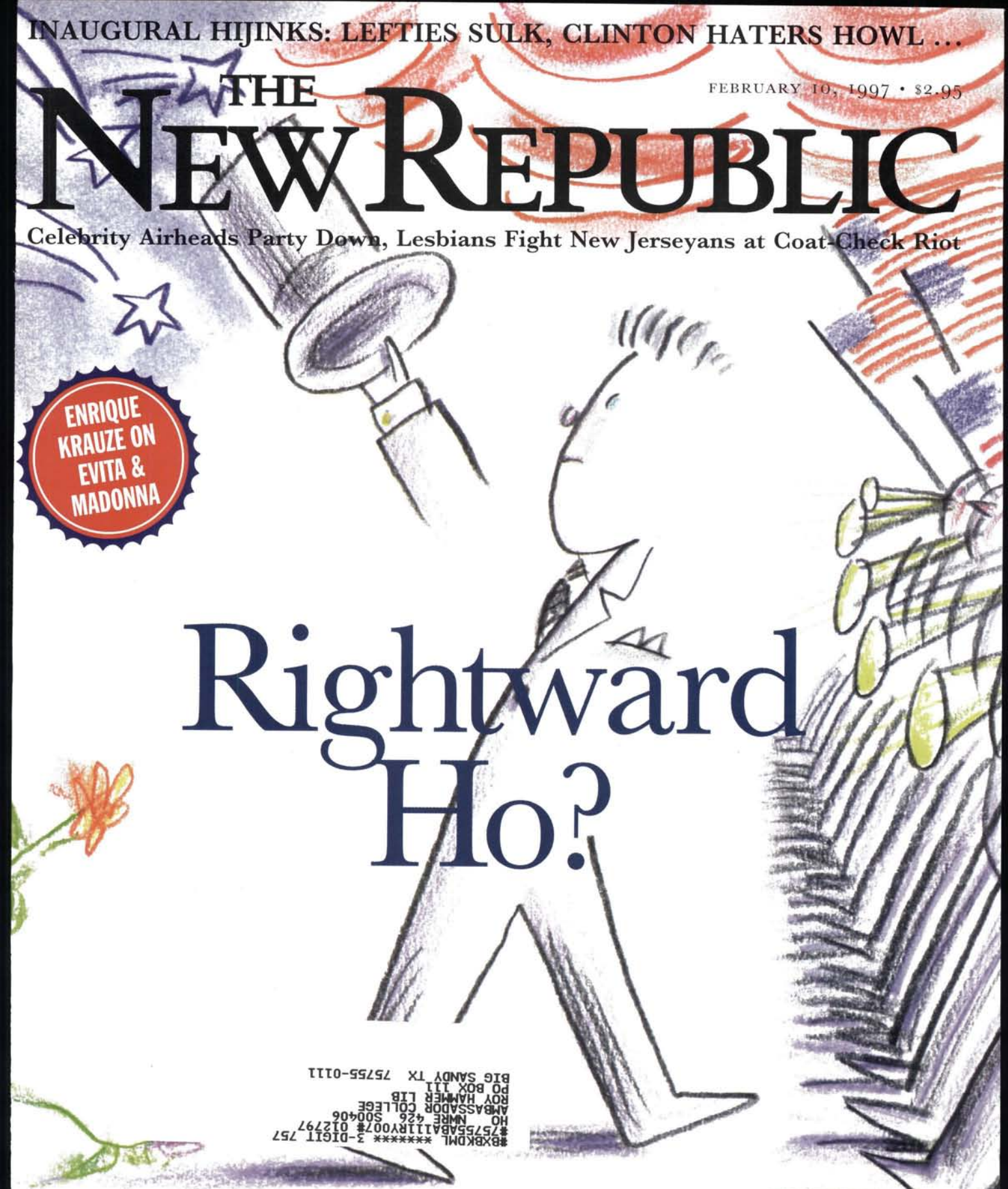
Celebrity Airheads Party Down, Lesbians Fight New Jerseyans at Coat-Check Riot

ENRIQUE KRAUZE ON EVITA & MADONNA



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The Direction of Clinton's Second Term

John B. Judis, Leon Wieseltier, TRB and the Editors

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Partners for Progress

Partnerships, joint ventures, cooperation and alliances are now more than ever important aspects of U.S.-Japan trade. "In one industry after another," reports *Business Week*, "U.S. and Japanese partners are breaking new ground in their level of cooperation."

This is especially true in the semiconductor industry. Long a flashpoint between U.S. and Japanese companies, the escalating cost of R&D and fabrication facilities—now about $1 billion for a single plant—has led to a number of joint ventures and alliances. To cite just two representative examples: Toshiba and Motorola are long-time partners in semiconductor manufacturing, and Fujitsu and AMD are expanding their successful joint venture for developing and producing advanced flash memory chips.

Far from being frozen out of the Japanese market, U.S. auto-parts manufacturers are becoming key suppliers to top Japanese firms—a major reason their sales in Japan exceeded $21 billion last year. TRW, through its parts division, has become a significant player in the Toyota and Nissan auto groups. And GM's Delphi Automotive Systems parts division is a leading supplier ($400 million last year) to Toyota and other Japanese auto companies.

The appeal of burgeoning markets in Asia has led many Japanese and American companies to join forces. Building on their success in Japan, for example, Caterpillar and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries are now targeting Asian markets for construction equipment, and GE has teamed with Mitsui to sell power generation equipment in China and Indonesia.

Does such cooperation mean that the U.S.-Japan business rivalry is over? Hardly. Even when American and Japanese companies cooperate, they still fight it out in the marketplace. But that's a gain for everyone, because it makes companies more competitive, spurs innovation and provides better value and quality to consumers in both countries and around the world.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

FEBRUARY 10, 1997

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ISSUE 4,282

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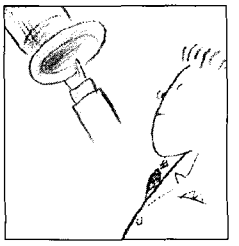

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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 216, Number 6, Issue 4,282, February 10, 1997. (Printed in the U.S. on January 22, 1997.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 6 & 13, July 14 & 21, Aug. 11 & 18, and Sept. 8 & 15, 1997) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. The New Republic Advertising Sales Office (212) 702-4882. Yearly subscriptions, $69.97; foreign, $99.97; Canada, $84.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling).

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(ISSN 0028-6583). Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, CD-ROM, issue and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Internet mail address: tnr@aol.com Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 602, Mount Morris, IL 61054. For subscription problems call 800-827-1289.

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CORRESPONDENCE

The German ideology

To the editors:

By now it should seem obvious that Daniel Jonah Goldhagen ("Motives, Causes and Alibis," December 23, 1996) is adamantly immune to criticism and supremely comfortable in his view that everything he has written is correct while everything his critics have said is, at best, nonsense, if not downright malicious. But since he has misconstrued the views of others and then used them to make his own case, I feel constrained to make the following brief points:

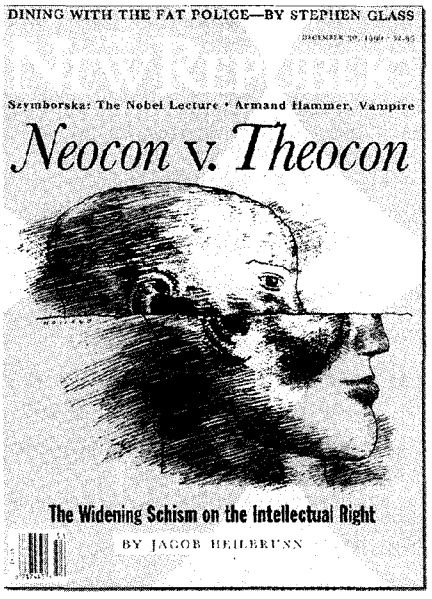
(1) Had he read the last and by far the longest chapter of my book *Hitler's Army* (1991), he would have been astonished to discover that I place a very heavy emphasis on ideological motivation among the soldiers of the Wehrmacht. My argument has always been that the combination of circumstances and ideology brutalized the perpetrators and served to legitimize their crimes in their eyes. But for this process to occur, one does not need to go back to the nineteenth century; it is enough to acknowledge that the perpetrators had been exposed to a barrage of propaganda in the media, the schools, the Hitler Youth, etc., since 1933. If he finds my study "problematic," he should at least have the courtesy to read it.

(2) Similarly, had Goldhagen read my book *Murder in Our Midst* (1996), he would have found a definition of what I mean by "industrial killing" and in what way I find it characteristic of modern Western society. That there are stark differences between the Rwandan genocide and the Holocaust, even if in both cases the killers hated the victims, should be obvious. The difference has little to do with the choice of weapons and everything to do with the mobilization of a modern state to undertake mass killing.

(3) Goldhagen asserts that, unlike others, he has "given a serious estimate of the numbers of Germans involved" in the Holocaust. On page 525, note 13 of his book, however, he writes: "Early in my research, I decided that deriving a good estimate of the number of people who were perpetrators would consume more time than I could profitably devote to it, given my research objectives. Still, I am confident in asserting that the number was huge." I happen to agree; but my view is as well documented as Goldhagen's, and 100,000 is as good a guess as any.

(4) Despite his claim that he posits no "essentialist view," Goldhagen writes on page 15 of his book that Germany should be seen as a "radically different culture," to be approached "with the critical eye of an anthropologist disembarking on unknown shores." If this is not essentialist, I wonder what is.

(5) Finally, Goldhagen employs a deplorable technique of argumentation. His obvious intelligence indicates that he does not misunderstand the other scholars' views, but is either ignorant of them or quite intentionally distorts them to suit his purposes. To be sure, by telling readers unfamiliar with the scholarship that his colleagues hid from them the truth about the Holocaust and that his is the only possible version of the past, Goldhagen has found a wide international audience. His views reflect common prejudices about the role of anti-Semitism and the peculiarities of German history in the


DINING WITH THE FAT POLICE—BY STEPHEN GLASS
Szymborska: The Nobel Lecture • Armand Hammer, Vampire
Neocon v. Theocon
The Widening Schism on the Intellectual Right
BY JACOB HEILBRUNN

Holocaust; they are presented as a rebellion against stuffy academics and woolly minded intellectuals; and they have enjoyed a veritable media blitz orchestrated by an enterprising publisher. No wonder that some pillars have been shaken. Whether all this shaking is in the service of truth is, however, a wholly different matter.

OMER BARTOV
Princeton, New Jersey

To the editors:

In both his earlier review of my book, *Ordinary Men* ("The Evil of Banality," July 13 & 20, 1992), and his recent reply to his critics, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen has made so many critical assertions about my scholarship that a letter to the editors is an inadequate format in which to respond fully. Nevertheless, some of his comments demand immediate response.

Goldhagen claims that his approach acknowledges the "humanity" of the perpetrators by treating them as "responsible agents who make choices." Scholars like myself, he asserts, have treated the perpetrators as "automatons" and "have kept the perpetrators at a comfortable arm's length." Really? It is one of the central conclusions of my work that there was a spectrum of response among the perpetrators, from enthusiastic participation through dutiful, nominal or reluctant compliance to various degrees of evasion. And it is one of my assumptions that the German perpetrators sufficiently shared the propensities and inclinations of people like myself that the insights of social psychology (which Goldhagen both caricatures and dismisses) are relevant to understanding their behavior. It is Goldhagen who urges scholars to rid themselves of the notion that Germans in the Third Reich were "more or less like us" or that "their sensibilities had remotely approximated our own." And it is Daniel Goldhagen who writes: "During the Nazi period and even long before, most Germans could no more emerge with cognitive models foreign to their society ... than they could speak fluent Romanian without ever having been exposed to it." So much for the less-than-arm's length humanity and choice of the perpetrators!

While Goldhagen has argued for a monocausal explanation of perpetrator motivation, I have offered a multi-causal explanation—what Goldhagen derides as a "laundry list." One of the factors that I emphasize is indeed "peer pressure," about which he writes: "Christopher Browning ... fails to present any actual evidence. He constructs it out of thin air." He then asserts categorically and absolutely: "*None* of the men in Police Battalion 101 *ever* mentions peer pressure as a factor in their thousands of pages of testimony [italics mine]."

Goldhagen has read my book as well as the many volumes of testimony, and he knows both include the following. One policeman who admitted shooting said: "If the question is posed to me why I shot with the others in the first place, I must answer that no one wants to be thought a coward." Another commented on the possibility of a policeman withdrawing from the firing squads: "I am also of the opinion that no one at this point in time would, on his own initiative, have dared [to withdraw], in order not to lose face before the assembled troops." And another policeman who claimed to be a non-shooter testified: "It could not be avoided that one or another of my comrades noticed that I was not going to the executions to fire away at the victims. They showered me with remarks such as 'shithead' and 'weakling' to express their disgust."

One may indeed debate the meaning and importance of such statements and

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question the veracity of these witnesses. But to state categorically that such statements concerning peer pressure simply do not exist and that I have constructed an important part of my interpretation "out of thin air" is demonstrably untrue. The charge of inventing evidence is one of the most serious accusations that can be made against the integrity of a scholar. Goldhagen, never very respectful of other scholars in the field of Holocaust studies and seldom shy about making gross generalizations, has repeatedly attacked my scholarship as incompetent. He has done so in a way that one scholar not at all unsympathetic to his thesis (Yaacov Lozowick, Yad Vashem's Director of Archives) says "skirts the edge of politeness, at best." With this current attack on my honesty and integrity as a scholar, Goldhagen has reached a new low. I consider such behavior reprehensible.

CHRISTOPHER R. BROWNING
Tacoma, Washington

Daniel Jonah Goldhagen replies:

Omer Bartov is silent on the central issues and challenges raised in my "reply." He diverts attention from them by launching a broadside of new ad hominem attacks (all of point five); misrepresentations (what an "essentialist view" is); obfuscations (the actual issue in point three is my still uncontested statement that before my book there was no serious estimate of something as fundamental as the number of perpetrators); and complaints that his own work has been unread and misrepresented (pages 3-5 of his book confirm that my criticism is based on a correct account of his "industrial killing"). Bartov's new attacks on me (such as that I accuse others of hiding "the truth about the Holocaust"), like the old ones, come without substantiation. By the way, Bartov does not know what happened in Rwanda and now reveals with point one that *he* is an advocate of an ahistorical approach to the study of the Holocaust.

I have never doubted Christopher Browning's integrity. I disagree with him over matters of interpretation and over the evidentiary foundation for certain critical assertions that he makes. I have pointed to such problems in his account because, without clarifying these evidentiary points, others could not judge whose account of Police Battalion 101 is better grounded in the evidence. It is odd that Browning brings up my review of his book without mentioning that we have since had a long exchange at a symposium at the Holocaust museum in Washington, D.C. There he defended other aspects of his book but was silent on the principal instances where I showed that on issues critical to his interpretations his assertions are not grounded in the evidence.

I have already discussed Browning's untenable methodological claims in the aforementioned exchange. He has not yet (including here) responded to my arguments which conform to fundamental rules of social science methodology. Here Browning unwittingly shows that his own argument about the Ukrainians in the *Schutzmannschaften* is untenable. These Ukrainian "subhumans" served to avoid dire fates. They were in no sense facing "the same organizational and situational factors" that their German masters in police battalions did.

As for the issue of "peer pressure," I used an imprecise shorthand in my reply that inadvertently suggests something I do not mean. As Browning knows—because I discuss the evidence he adduces and his peer pressure argument explicitly in my book (pages 251, 384-85, 547-49, 580 n. 22)—what I take issue with is his *unusual* peer pressure argument.

Browning suggests that almost all of the men who participated in the slaughter of Jews thought it to be morally wrong, yet, even though they knew that they could avoid killing, they, time after time, killed Jews. Why? According to Browning, because of a particular kind of "peer pressure" that existed in this unusually "tight-knit unit": "Since the battalion had to shoot even if individuals did not, refusing to shoot constituted refusing one's share of an unpleasant [sic] collective obligation. It was in effect an asocial act vis-à-vis one's comrades."

For the existence of this particular attitude in the battalion, there is no evidence in the documentary record. None of the men of Police Battalion 101 (or scores of other units) testifies, "we believed that the killing of the Jews was a crime, yet we killed them, even volunteering for killing operations, lest we be accused of leaving the 'dirty work' to our comrades." It is this idiosyncratic "peer pressure" explanation (everyone accepts that disapproving individuals sometimes do things because of pressure from an *approving* majority) that Browning constructs "out of thin air"—which is only to indicate that his view is speculation.

Both Bartov and Browning have accused me of Nazi-like defamation of Germans, which Bartov now reduces to "common [anti-German] prejudices." If so, why has my book had its greatest success in Germany? In my reply, I challenged Bartov and Browning to justify this charge and finally to address the historical issues of how one explains not just the killing but all the other actions of the perpetrators—their cruelty, zeal, photographing, boasting and celebrations, indeed the entire character of the perpetration of the Holocaust. They have neither justified their accusation nor engaged the issues.

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FROM WASHINGTON

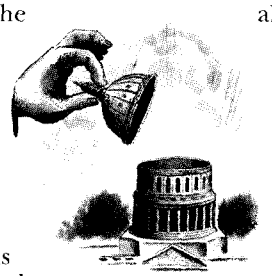
Rope-a-hope

Both the promise and the problem of Clintonism begins with hope. Bill Clinton loves hope; he can't stop thinking about tomorrow (if you had his problems, you wouldn't linger over yesterday and today, either). In 1992, Clinton ran for president on a campaign of almost boundless hope. This was regarded by *many* as a good thing, but it was not entirely. The good thing was that it made people feel nice. The bad thing, as Clinton found out after he was elected, was that it is difficult to actually deliver on pledges of the sun and the moon. The disjunction between hope and deliverance had unfortunate results for the president, such as a rise in cynicism and the elections of 1994. But Clinton, with the help of Dick Morris's triangulations and Newt Gingrich's prevarications, turned it around in late 1995, pulled himself up from 40 percent in the polls and won re-election. He was able to do so in part because he mastered the politics of symbolism, the technique of painting real but relatively modest accomplishments (V-chips, family medical leave, targeted tax cuts, tuition tax credits, Americorps, etc.) as the fulfillment of large promises. In the converse of one of his inaugural lines, with Clintonism, small things do come from being large. Thus, he papered over the politically dangerous disjunction that he had created.

The question now, as President Clinton begins his second term, is whether he is prepared to move beyond the pattern of over-promising, under-delivering and masking the gap between the two with words and gestures and on-camera poses. His inaugural address answered the first part of the question. Here is Clinton on what lies ahead for America:

"In this new land, education will be every citizen's most prized possession. Our schools will have the highest standards in the world, igniting the spark of possibility in the eyes of every girl and every boy. And the doors of higher education will be open to all. The knowledge and power of the Information Age will be within reach not just to the few, but of every classroom, every library, every child.... Our streets will echo again with the laughter of our children because no one will try to shoot them or sell them drugs any more. Everyone who can work will work, with today's permanent underclass part of tomorrow's growing middle class.... Our land of new promise will be a nation that meets its obligations, a nation that balances its budget but never loses the balance of its values; a nation where ... the voice of the people will always speak louder than the din of narrow interest...."

This is over-promising on a scale that would give God pause. One shudders to think of what the president's advisers made him take out. ("Sir, about the part where the lion lies down with the lamb....")



Consider just one element of Clinton's vision, the breezy promise of a nation where "our schools will have the highest standards in the world.... And the doors of higher education are open to all. [Where] the knowledge and power of the Information Age will be within reach not just to the few, but ... every child." Every several years, the federal government sponsors the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a review of educational achievement by American students. In its measurement of reading ability, students are ranked in four groups: Advanced, Proficient, Basic, Below Basic. "Advanced" means being able to read at the level of, say, a properly performing student in the Japanese or French school systems; this is the population that will go on to first-rate colleges and membership in the top tier of the Information Age economy. "Proficient" is the target level; according to the testers, every American student should be able to read proficiently, which is to say able to understand moderately complicated texts, such as a *New York Times* op-ed. "Basic" means being able to more or less understand simple texts, such as soup-can labels and *Rolling Stone*. "Below Basic" means something close to functional illiteracy; a "Below Basic" student can probably read a STOP sign, but not a menu.

The 1994 NAEP report rated only 4 percent of twelfth-graders at or above Advanced. Thirty-six percent were rated at or above Proficient. Seventy-five percent were rated at or above Basic. Twenty-five percent of American twelfth-grade students, or one out of four, were rated Below Basic. One quarter of the *high-school seniors in Bill Clinton's* America, in other words, are functionally illiterate. And these are the cheering figures. For black students, the picture is one of generational catastrophe. The 1994 NAEP report rated 1 percent of black twelfth-graders as Advanced, 13 percent at or above Proficient, 52 percent at or above basic and 48 percent below basic. Nearly one half of all black high-school seniors in Bill Clinton's America are functionally illiterate.

Of course, the vision thing is not by itself bad. If the president is prepared to deliver on his promises, he may make them as grand as he wishes. Has Clinton decided to replace symbolism with seriousness? He has given us already a means to answer this. On the day after his inauguration, Clinton delivered the first speech of his second term, to fellow Democrats in Washington. He thumpingly called for reform of the laws governing the acceptance by the political parties of "soft money," a practice of legalized bribery that in the 1996 elections (and particularly in the Democratic Party) reached historic levels of corruption. Specifically, Clinton demanded the passage of the McCain-Feingold bill, a bipartisan measure that would ban soft money in national politics, and he also pledged the Democratic National Committee to a policy of not accepting contributions from non-citizens and foreign-owned businesses.

Sounds noble, but there was less to the proposal than met the ear. As Clinton knows, congressional Republicans are not going to accept a ban on soft money (they raise more of it than the Democrats do) without some concession in areas where the Democrats hold the high card, such as the use of union dues for political purposes. And the pledge to not accept foreign money contains loopholes within loopholes. The DNC could, for instance, funnel the money through state parties.

We will know soon enough if Clinton is going to continue to talk large and act small. We will know this if his overture on soft money turns out to be the beginning and the end of it. In that case, Clinton will not seriously negotiate and fight to make McCain-Feingold law. He will instead play the suitor spurned; he offered his hand, they didn't take it, and that's that. Then both parties will return to the happy business of bagmen and offshore bank accounts. And we will hear more about hope.

MICHAEL KELLY

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

FEBRUARY 10, 1997

THREE MODEST PROPOSALS

At this ideologically diverse magazine, there was a considerable range of opinion about the rhetorical merits of President Clinton's second inaugural address. Some of us admired its earnest optimism; others were unmoved by its grand and gauzy promises. But as Clinton waited intently on the Capitol balcony to deliver his speech, his lips moving silently as he rehearsed the text, it was hard not to be impressed by the sincerity of his desire to leave his mark on history. He seems appropriately ambitious, in his second term, to leave a larger legacy than V-chips and school uniforms.

Fortunately, that legacy is within his grasp. Congressional Republicans, led by a Speaker desperate to restore himself to some measure of respectability, are similarly anxious about the history books. For the moment anyway, they are at least somewhat receptive to Clinton's challenge to set aside "the politics of petty bickering and extreme partisanship." But if something other than platitudes and pieties is to come of this moment, Clinton must move, now, beyond the politics of symbolism with which he and his administration have become so enamored. He must identify several large, concrete, substantive goals for his second term, and he must expend the energy, courage and political capital necessary to achieve these goals. Here are three suggestions.

• Welfare. "Record numbers of our fellow citizens have moved from welfare to work," the president said in his inaugural address. Actually, record numbers of our fellow citizens are moving off welfare, because the law gives them no choice. Whether they are moving permanently into the realm of work or onto the sidewalk remains an open question. For better or for worse (and we think, for better), President Clinton will be remembered as the Democrat who ended the Great Society welfare state. But without a sustained and resolute effort to deal with the immense task of suiting chronic welfare recipients for the demands of working life, it is by no means clear that the abolition of a federal entitlement for dependent children will encourage personal responsibility, rather than simply increasing poverty and its attendant miseries. The first priority of President Clinton's second term should be to refine the reform he signed. This cannot be achieved through cosmetic tinkering and symbolic photo-ops. It requires making a significant, and politically unpopular, financial commitment to job creation. We have long advocated a serious, expensive federal work program. Anything like this will be resisted as strenuously as Clinton's health care proposal was. But if Clinton really is committed to making "today's permanent underclass part of tomorrow's growing middle class," he must do everything possible to ensure that Congress enacts such a program.

• Social Security and Medicare. "Our land of new promise will be ... a nation where our grandparents have secure retirement and health care, and their grandchildren know we have made the reforms necessary to sustain those benefits for their time." Will it really? The president spent much of his final year in office demagoguing the Republicans on Medicare reform; now he proposes reforms remarkably similar to those that he previously assailed. He should, of course, pick his battles on entitlement reform; but if he is serious about his domestic legacy, Clinton will have to champion fundamental Social Security reform. This means some kind of means testing. Like Nixon with China, Clinton has the political capital to meet the most daunting political challenge of his age.

• Race. "The divide of race has been America's constant curse.... We cannot, we will not succumb to the dark impulses that lurk in the far regions of the soul everywhere." Although the sincerity of Clinton's commitment to racial healing is beyond dispute, his attempt to embrace irreconcilable visions of racial justice during his first term—such as color-blindness and racialism—have deprived him of moral leadership in an area where he should be a moral leader. His rhetoric about mending affirmative action notwithstanding, Clinton has been unwilling to end even the least defensible racial preferences, such as set-asides for contractors. A few weeks ago, Clinton's Justice Department embraced the constitutionally implausible and morally unjustifiable position that the California Civil Rights Initiative, which requires government to be neutral on matters of race, is itself unconstitutional. This is a view that Clinton's own Supreme Court nominees will almost certainly reject. If Clinton is unwilling to speak honestly about the hard choices posed by affirmative action, he should at least remain scrupulously neutral, and allow the people of each state to choose, or reject, color-blindness as they see fit.

"The pre-eminent mission of our new government is to give all Americans an opportunity—not a guarantee, but a real opportunity—to build better lives," Clinton said on Monday. We think he has the opportunity, the ambition and the intelligence to ensure that his second term is larger and more historic than his first. Whether he has the courage remains to be seen. •

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NOTEBOOK

CHILD'S PLAY: On January 14, Clinton inaugural co-chair Ann Dibble Jordan announced that "the President's highest priority" for this weekend's inaugural jubilee would be "to provide our children with activities ... that reach our past and touch their future." And indeed, in "An American Journey," a kiddie inaugural pageant sponsored in part by the Smithsonian Institution, the ethos of Clintonism found its fullest expression. The result was a festival of sugar-coated ethnic correctness—a perfectly pleasant way to pass the day if you don't mind a little preaching with your pierogies. In "Mi Casa Su Casa," a family of hand puppets extolled the meritorious deeds of Latin American matriarchs. A theater troupe called "Eth-noh-Tec," resplendent in their Chinese courtly vestments, fused "Eastern and Western tales of tricksters and fools." Traditional patriotic encomia, meanwhile, were downscaled and deconstructed. Instead of lavishing praise on the Founding Fathers, Dan LeMonnier's "Yankee Doodle Tales" had a more modest aim: to celebrate the lives and toil of "simple folk whose lives are indelibly connected to the American Revolution." But the highlight of the day's festivities was unquestionably "One Family/One Planet," in which husband-and-wife team Kim and Reggie Harris used "music, stories and play action ... to celebrate the diversity that makes the Earth a wonderful home." When they bounded out from behind the curtain, clapping their hands and chanting peaceful proverbs, it was hard to suppress the urge to cuddle a tree. The mood grew sunnier still when Kim and Reggie invited the crowd to join them in their anthem, "One Family—One Planet—One World." While Kim led the audience in the refrain, Reggie warbled feelingly: "Violence, racism, drugs and such/ That's ignorance off the scale!/We better start taking care of Mother Earth/Let's get back on the nature trail." Then, as he prepared to release his charges into the winter air, Reggie urged them to "Please, just think a little bit about maybe eating something good today. And think about doing something good for the planet." The Patagonia-and-Aprica crowd shouted their assent, then toddled off to "America's Kitchen" to gorge on an array of delicacies. "Be good—to your body," singsonged a blond boy, echoing a Harris jingle as he scarfed down fried mozzarella and cajun fries. "And your body will be good to you!" It was an oddly patriotic moment: junk food trumps agitprop. Democracy lives.

NICE START: The Palestinian Authority took over Hebron on January 17. Within days, both *New York Times* and *Washington Post* correspondents in the city reported that the Palestinians were violating an agreement signed only the week before, after many months of negotiation. "There seemed to be far more police on hand," said the *Post*'s Barton Gellman, "than the 400 permitted by the ... agreement, not even counting the many more assumed to be present in plainclothes." Both papers also reported that many in the Palestinian militia were seen brandishing weapons not allowed, as the *Post* put it, in "the agreement's careful inventory of 200 pistols and 100 rifles." The Israelis complained. And Mustafa Natsheh, the mayor of Hebron, responded: "Officially, 400 is the number. But maybe it will be double or triple that to keep order. Who is going to count them?" On to future agreements, and even more confidence-building.

SWEARING REVENGE: In his inaugural speech, Bill Clinton called for an end to "bickering and extreme partisanship," and most observers responded with mild approval. But his swearing-in provoked fury among one constituency not known for its radicalism: Girl Scouts. Katie Schleeter stopped passing out flags on Pennsylvania Avenue to demand an amendment to the nation's most solemn ritual. "It should have been a Girl Scout and a Boy Scout" to lead the audience in a Pledge of Allegiance at the swearing-in, she said. "It would have been amazing if there had been a Girl Scout up there, too," concurred Cynthia Creem, a former Girl Scout, while waiting to take her place in the parade viewing stands. "It's time.... I mean it was great that Al Gore was sworn in by a woman and a woman sang.... But why couldn't there have been a Girl Scout up there?" When talk turned to the First Lady's silence on the issue, you could almost taste the betrayal. Patty, another former Girl Scout, asked, "Why didn't Hillary chime in and say, 'Bill, there should be a Girl Scout, too?' " The problem, explains Sinead Kayser, a Scout volunteering from neighboring Virginia, is that "the Girl Scouts are often forgotten. They think all we do is sell cookies." Lamented her friend, "You think Girl Scout ... you think cookies."

THE PEOPLE SPEAK: As part of the inaugural weekend events on the Mall, passersby were asked to affix their answers to the question "What must we do to build a bridge to the 21st century?" to an astroturf and plywood bridge. Here are some of the more inspired responses:

- We must have some good structural engineers and more rice pudding
- Don't Beat Your Wife or Your Dog
- Neuter Ralph Reed
- Use Strong Steel, Not Plywood
- Readi-Cheez
- Evacuate Suburbia
- Milk and Cookies for All
- Have more sex ... often
- Don't give up on Health Care
- Oink, Dude!
- Make the Bulls win Every Game
- Be kind to Canadians
- Remember that your "We" does not include me
- Get a new Metaphor

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A Clinton-bashers' bash.

NUTS TO YOU

By Sydney Freedberg Jr.

A man in a Clinton mask, a paper crown, a trenchcoat and precious little else walked into a bar. This is not the beginning of a joke—not entirely: the man was part of "Flashers for Clinton," a little piece of street theater in support of Paula Jones that took place in Washington this week. He was heading to something called the Clinton Investigative Committee's Anti-Inaugural Gala, a party to launch the Committee to Impeach the President—which turned out to consist of about fifty Clinton conspiracy-mongers gathered in the murky, musty basement of the Irish Times, a saloon across the street from the train station.

The basement of the Irish Times is dark and narrow, and not given to overstatement. There are a dozen plastic tables, a foot-high stage, a few posters on the walls—one celebrating Malcolm X and another Banned Books Week—and a mural depicting King Kong atop the Empire State Building. On this day, there were additional decorations: handwritten signs such as "Who Hired Craig Livingstone?" and "The President is not above the law."

In the dim artificial light, partygoers rued the presence of lesbians in the Seattle police force and of Mary Landrieu in the Senate, and muttered darkly about Vince Foster. A man waiting in line at the buffet (chips, pickles, olives, cold cuts, cheese and surprisingly progressive whole wheat buns) offered an unexpected take on the re-inauguration of Bill Clinton. God was "using Clinton as an instrument for teaching the people about good and evil." Which in his opinion was good news.

His spirit turned out to be the general one. As the man the Clinton-haters hated was parading down Pennsylvania Avenue, the mood among his bitterest enemies was oddly unmournful. The guests at the Anti-Inaugural have had two months to get over Clinton's victory—and to bask in the intensifying coverage of DNC fund-raising scandals, Paula Jones and shady White House visitors. They're excitable people anyway, and now they were ready to proclaim their day had come.

The ultra right-wing activist Eugene Delgaudio stood before the King Kong mural and opened the program. Delgaudio's usual mode of agitprop is blunt street theater; he once staged an anti-gay marriage event at which the pretend liberal group D.O.N.K.E.Y.—the "Degenerate Organization for Normalization of Kinky Extra-species Yearnings"—held a wedding between a man and a donkey. But now, announcing the day's guest-of-honor, he sounded respectful, even awestruck: "Our hero, Gary Aldrich!" Suddenly everyone was silent, eager and attentive.

In this setting, Aldrich—the author of a book accusing the president of sneaking out of the White House under a blanket for midday trysts at a downtown hotel—shone like the light of pure reason from above. He is a soft-spoken, neat man, with short gray hair. He began his speech by mentioning that he has "met with some of the most interesting people" since the June, 1996 publication of *Unlimited Access*. This seemed to be directed at his hosts: Aldrich smiled; the crowd laughed; Delgaudio mock-protested. Aldrich gave the crowd a small helping of red meat. "The Clintons are incapable of running a clean operation down there at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue," he said. He promised, calmly, to leave the country unless a Republican—or, at least, a man he considers honest—is in the White House four years from now.

But after his speech was over, the star speaker made a point, hardly gracious, of distancing himself from his hosts. "I don't know seven-eighths of the people here," he insisted. He even took issue with the whole theme of the event: "I have my doubts whether it's a good idea to impeach a president."

This is the ambivalent place where the Clinton haters find themselves on the eve of the hated figure's second term. Much of what they have spent the last four years howling about has been granted some measure of place in the national talk about Clinton, and for this, the haters are grateful. But exposure of their claims has also meant exposure of them, and this has not been completely good for the cause. Truth will out, but so will loopiness.

Delgaudio? "He's a nut." Across town and above ground, P.J. O'Rourke and Christopher Buckley were holding a high-powered party for the more respectable right wing, at a trendy nightspot called Cities. The guest who offered that description of Delgaudio declined to be named, but his reaction was not atypical. For the established right, Delgaudio and company are, increasingly, an irrelevance. The extremists may think they've got Clinton on the run, and are gleefully gearing up for the final battle that will save American decency from the death-grip of a ruthless liberal establishment, but their more mainstream colleagues know better.

Haley Barbour, who that day had cleaned out his chairman's desk at the Republican National Committee offices, was leaning, somewhat heavily, against the bar. "I sure do hate that Clinton being re-inaugurated," he said. "I hate it like the Pope hates sin. But, hey, what the hell? He's been elected. It's a democracy. God bless it. And God bless him. He's the president again, and I guess I have to drink to that. I'll have a Maker's Mark." •

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Lefties left out.

RADICAL UNCHIC

By Romesh Ratnesar

"NOW LIBERALS DON'T EVEN LOOK DEAD," moaned the headline of Paul Gigot's pre-inaugural column in *The Wall Street Journal* last Friday. "Liberal Democrats, supposedly deader than Jerry Garcia, are ready to rock." Freed from the restraints of electioneering, Gigot argued, the Clinton of 1993 may re-emerge. "The betting here is that Republicans who've been crowing about Mr. Clinton's move to the right are in for a tougher ideological battle than they think." Their relevance confirmed by no less an adversary than the *Journal* editorial page, you might think liberals would use the inaugural to flex their muscles. You would be wrong.

As inaugural weekend approached, lefties had two options. They could publicly decry the president's betrayal of his liberal supporters. Or they could join the party and get down with the hated New Democrats. They did both with evident dispirit, gathering for a few barely noticed protests and a couple of even less-noticed attempts to claim victory. Mostly, though, the liberal elites that Gigot believes still guide our government celebrated the first occasion since Franklin D. Roosevelt that a Democratic president has been reinaugurated by staying home.

The handful of old-fashioned liberal demonstrations that could be found were neither all that demonstrative nor all that liberal. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), which gained notoriety in the 1980s for dousing fur coats with paint, and which hosted a ribald pre-inaugural ball in 1993, could muster only a tiny anti-fur "celebration" this year outside the MTV-Condé Nast party—a celebration, it turned out, of Hillary Clinton's fur-free first term and Chelsea's vegetarianism. Eight PETA members handed out party hats and cooed greetings to arriving guests. The only break in decorum came when a woman in line found her mink slathered in red paint. "Who the fuck put paint on my coat?" she shrieked, before entering the party in tears. The PETA demonstrators hardly gloated over this act of sabotage; actually, they seemed a little scared. "Don't mention anything about this again," one volunteer told me, and went back to the party hats. A feed-in by homeless advocacy groups during Monday's inaugural ceremony was confined to a nondescript sidewalk west of the Capitol, out of earshot, sight and mind. At one point, the organizers tried to stir up anti-Clinton sentiment. "Who voted for Clinton in '92?" one woman yelled through a bullhorn. "Who made that mistake again?" The objects of her exhortation responded by trudging ever more steadily toward the food.

A few progressives tried the other tack, insisting, with a vehemence usually found only on the right, that inside Bill Clinton's soul there is a liberal yearning to get out. Some of these odd animals—Clinton progressives, you could call them—turned up at the inaugural weekend's national meeting of Americans for Democratic Action. Until last year, ADA had historically thrown its weight behind left-wing challenges to incumbent Democrats. So when the group endorsed Clinton in January of 1996, it signaled, in many ways, the exhaustion of the American left's alternatives. But people at ADA have convinced themselves that Clinton II will awaken liberal spirits. "We're hopeful that in the second term, when he's not accountable to constituents, he will reach back to his core values, and will come out swinging for what he believes in," Amy Isaacs, national director of ADA, said at its inaugural-night bash, which went by the waggish title, "Let's Party, Liberally."

Two days earlier, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney told the national board of ADA that "liberals are on the verge of the greatest comeback in United States history." According to this reading of the 1996 election, Clinton won and the Democrats nearly stole back control of Congress because both pledged to hold the line on traditional liberal social programs. Sweeney thundered: "You can count on a revived liberal-labor movement to ... defend the liberal pillars that support the roof over our society: Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid...."

But even if that is a winning agenda, it's also a static one. Which may explain why the left, as inaugural weekend showed, has become so ... boring. And it may be why many liberals I spoke with conceded there's an element of self-delusion to this talk of the left's recovery. Jack Gold, a partygoer who dislikes Clinton and yet voted for him anyway, said, "I don't think the left was that important at all. It was, only in the sense that third-party candidates weren't voted into office."

Gold's remark captured the left's mood in Washington this week. While there was surely something admirable in the spectacle of the old-style liberals of ADA showing such thick-skinned pragmatism, there was also surely something a bit sad. "Let's Party, Liberally" took place at the Washington Court Hotel in a dimly lit ballroom befitting a high-school prom. Though tickets cost only $25 and the dress code was casual, a fair number of attendees wore tuxedos and party gowns anyway. The band offered some '70s guitar-rock, and once it started playing, the wood-tile floor in front of the stage became a strange tangle of disparate body rhythms and dance styles, a farrago of denim, taffeta and tulle. About halfway through the first set, a couple in Bill and Hillary masks was led to the stage, where "Bill" blew a fake saxophone for a couple of numbers. A new crop of revelers meandered to the dance floor, and the rest stood on the periphery of the half-empty room, munching on mini quiches and staring silently into their drinks. It must feel good to win. •

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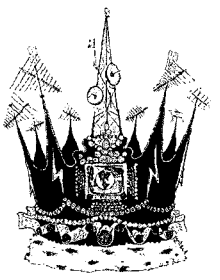
MEDIA REX

LOOKING FOR LOVE

By William Powers

Since an inaugural is just a ceremony and, as such, largely devoid of content—it's not *about* anything except itself—it can serve as a kind of laboratory for the study of media behavior. Question: If you took all the national news outfits and exposed them to stimuli strongly suggestive of a major news story (top Washington pols rushing around in black cars, gathering at marble buildings), when in fact they were in a news vacuum, what would they do? What substance, if any, would they impose on the substanceless event? And what can media consumers learn from the results? Some findings:

(1) *The press is motivated by a desire not just for influence, but for respect.* One of the highest compliments you can pay to a news organization is to say it is fair. Most are only too eager to profess their absolute fealty to the highest standards of fairness. But newspeople secretly worry about all the criticism they receive on fairness, and the lack of respect such criticism implies. Precisely because an inaugural is so intellectually vaporous and so little is at stake, it is the ideal occasion to score fairness points. A news organ does this by leaning in the direction opposite to its usual one. Thus, on inaugural Sunday and Monday, the readers of some of America's leading newspapers woke up to a startling situation: the pro-Clinton sheets were tough on, and skeptical of, the president, while the customary bashers were blowing kisses.



The New York Times editorial page, which had endorsed Clinton for a second term, weighed in gravely: "President Clinton's oath-taking today takes place in an atmosphere chilled by scandal, contentiousness and widespread public disappointment.... More than most re-elected Presidents, Mr. Clinton still comes across to Americans as unfinished and unpredictable." *The Washington Post*, another endorser, was similarly unimpressed: "President Clinton begins his second term tomorrow. It is hard to anticipate how it will go. The striking thing about the first term is the extent to which the major accomplishments were political rather than substantive." And the front page of the inaugural day's New York *Daily News*, which had also called for Clinton's re-election, didn't even mention the swearing-in. Meanwhile, the normally savage editorial page of *The Wall Street Journal* had this to say of Clinton II: "The initial portents are pretty good." *The Washington Times* went so far as to run an exclusive bylined article by the president ("By Bill Clinton, Special For *The Washington Times*"), while the paper's lead editorial opined: "He deserves not to be underestimated. He is a master. And today's his day. God bless him...." And the lead editorial of the conservative *New York Post* bore the headline "ALL THE BEST, MR. PRESIDENT."

(2) *They want to be loved.* Newsies use the inaugural moment to demonstrate that, occasional appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, they are in fact members of the human race. This is a hidden, if unconscious, purpose of the heartfelt inaugural feature story. When the story is of a president beginning his first term, the point is to assure an increasingly anti-media public that we, too, share the patriotic hope and the passion. When the story is of a president beginning his second term, the point is to show that we, too, feel the pain and the joy of our president's life, so lonely at the top. On inaugural day this year, *The Washington Post* ran an engaging piece by Peter Baker about a secret fax line that the president's closest outside friends use to keep in touch with him. The fax, one learned, not only alleviates Clinton's "frustration at the suffocating constrictions of the White House, a feeling of isolation from the real life and real people he once knew," but recently offered him "a little solace at a gut-wrenching time"—that time being Paula Jones's day at the Supreme Court.

And, it has to be admitted, there is a certain entertainment value to watching a journalist attempt to have a feeling in public. This is a perverse value, the enjoyment of seeing a thing done badly. As Chelsea Clinton took her place at the swearing-in, for example, CBS's Dan Rather and Bob Schieffer offered these observations:

Schieffer: "It's not easy to be a president's child...."

Rather: "But also, let's note that Chelsea did not just go to school to eat her lunch, that she finished high up in her class...."

Schieffer: "She's just a good kid."

Rather: "Well, she also has a sunshine smile, a combination of the smile of her father and her mother."

(3) *Osmosis rules.* As political elites pass over into journalism, and reporters play at being members of the political elite, and everyone ends up on the same talk shows and at the same parties, it's increasingly hard to tell the two camps apart. Over inaugural weekend, the evidence mounted. On Sunday, George Stephanopoulos took his place at the table on ABC's "This Week" show—speaking, you understand, not as a Clinton flack but as an "ABC News Political Analyst." "I think the president is clearly looking to start to rise above the political fray," he observed. Then, on Monday, Barbara Walters took her place at the Clintons' table at the VIP luncheon in the Capitol's Statuary Hall—she was Senator John Warner's date—in the capacity of a celebrity equal. A friend who watched the festivities with me dubbed Walters "our alternative First Lady."

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(4) *C-SPAN imitates life.* Surfing the expanse of inaugural coverage offered by my satellite dish, I kept lingering on C-SPAN. Why? Compared to the network style of coverage we were all raised on, its relatively unfiltered delivery of political events still feels radical, even exciting. The networks insist on making their intermediaries, the anchorpeople and their attendant reporters, central to the story—indeed it often seems that they *are* the story. When you pay people as much as Peter Jennings and Tom Brokaw are paid, I suppose you have to give them something to do. But the blather becomes intensely annoying, especially when C-SPAN shows how unnecessary it is. C-SPAN embraces silence. It is happy to linger over a room after the main political event is over, so we can watch the milling and the schmoozing. It is the viewer's eyes and ears, but not—with the exception of relatively infrequent commentary—his brain. You are, simply, there. While Peter Jennings was interviewing Sam Donaldson just after the swearing-in, C-SPAN was following the president as he walked through the Capitol Rotunda. Which would you rather watch? When Clinton and Gore joined a bunch of senators in an ornate room of the Capitol for the signing of an inaugural document, you could hear on C-SPAN almost every word of their inane small talk, and it was improbably fascinating. When Clinton finished his inaugural address, Rather followed custom and immediately began commenting on it, even though John Warner had taken the podium and was himself speaking. The anchor had simply made a decision for us that what Warner had to say did not matter. Meanwhile, over on C-SPAN, the talking head was, as usual, blessedly, not talking. •

Behind the living wage hype.

WAGES OF POLITICS

By Matthew Miller

While Bill Clinton worried in his inaugural about whether government was "the problem," "the solution" or neither, Carlos, one of 11,000 security workers in Los Angeles who make less than $7.50 an hour, worried about food. Carlos, who is 35, gets $4.75 an hour from a city contractor to screen carry-on baggage full-time at Los Angeles International Airport. He spends half of the $700 he earns each month on rent. After gas and phone and electric bills, and toys and clothes for his 3-year-old and infant, Carlos is always short on food. His family gets by thanks to free food from three churches. Like most of the 27,000 janitors, 9,200 gardeners and 3,000 parking attendants in L.A. who make less than $7.50 (or $15,600 a year, the poverty line for a family of four), Carlos also gets no health insurance, no paid holiday or sick days, and no vacation. In his first term, Clinton had people like Carlos in mind when he called for universal health coverage and for "making work pay." Now, having delivered last year an increase in the minimum wage that will leave it worth less than it was in the 1960s, and a welfare bill that will send several million unskilled mothers into the market to hold down wages for folks like Carlos, Clinton is focusing his attention on symbols—the school uniform and V-chip approach to governing. He'd also like us to teach our kids to read.

As national government goes virtual, local government must get real. And so, the fight for work with dignity has devolved from a Democratic president to the Los Angeles City Council, which is set to vote next month on an ordinance that (as of this writing) would require city contractors to pay their employees $7.25 an hour plus health benefits (or $8.50 without; the current minimum wage, by contrast, is $4.75, slated to increase to $5.15 next year). Los Angeles is only the latest locality to be drawn into the "living wage" movement, which seeks to use city purchasing power to promote better labor conditions, and which has gotten similar laws enacted recently in Baltimore, San Jose, New York, Jersey City, St. Paul and Milwaukee.

At first blush, the living wage fight sounds fierce and looks important. State Senator Tom Hayden, who recently announced his candidacy for mayor, calls incumbent Richard Riordan "the arch-enemy of a living wage for the working poor." Riordan and the Chamber of Commerce counter that the ordinance is a budget-buster that insulates municipal unions from competition while inviting business to flee. Yet the actual impact of L.A.'s wage measure would be tiny. It turns out that it isn't just government that is devolving from the national to the local. So, unfortunately, is symbolism.

Today's Los Angeles drama began in late 1995, after such companies as McDonald's and Puck's took over food service operations at the L.A. airport and promptly fired 300 better-paid workers in favor of minimum-wage help with no benefits. With another 900 workers facing the ax, City Council member Jackie Goldberg of Hollywood, a former civil rights activist and the first openly gay member of the council, called hearings. Eventually, Goldberg pushed through a "worker retention" ordinance. It required new contractors in such changeovers to retain workers for ninety days (to evaluate whether they belonged in their new jobs), after which they could be fired only for "cause." The companies involved lived with it (few further layoffs took place), but the broader business community panicked. Goldberg, meanwhile, got interested in why the city's contracting process produced so many impoverished workers. A year later, with a coalition of unions, religious

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Bayard Rustin

We recently celebrated the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., an American hero who devoted his life to making this country a place where everybody could enjoy the rights promised by our constitution. As always, Dr. King's anniversary brought to mind other fighters in the cause of justice who worked side by side with him. I thought particularly of a dear friend, Bayard Rustin, the tenth anniversary of whose death will come this year.

Saying that Rustin was a major force in the civil rights movement of the 1960s is true, but it doesn't get to the heart of his life and character. Rustin was a gifted leader, but he headed no mass organization. His influence came from his moral, intellectual, and physical courage. In some respects, he was the quintessential outsider—a black man, a Quaker, a one-time pacifist, a political and social dissident, a homosexual. Yet Rustin always believed in the necessity of creating political coalitions to enable minorities to build majorities in support of lasting progress. Jervis Anderson's new biography, *Bayard Rustin: The Troubles I've Seen*, which is being published this month by Harper Collins, presents a full-length portrait of this extraordinary man that will tell even Rustin's friends things they did not know about his life.

He always insisted that racism is evil, no matter who is the victim.

Anderson's account of Rustin's role in the civil rights movement of the 1960s is particularly valuable because Rustin often worked behind the scenes. For example, he played a critical part in helping Martin Luther King develop the strategy of nonviolence that King first used in the Montgomery bus boycott. Dr. King was strongly attracted to the idea of nonviolent protest. However, he was uncertain about the practical strategies needed to carry it out. Rustin's Quaker pacifist background and his understanding of nonviolence, as practiced in India by Gandhi and his followers, provided the practical knowledge Dr. King needed to create the form of protest that he would use in Montgomery and throughout his career.

Rustin is perhaps best known as a strategist and chief organizer for the 1963 March on Washington. As Anderson reminds us, it was largely thanks to Rustin's political insight that the march focused on jobs as well as freedom; Rustin understood that political equality would be worth very little unless black people could also have equality of economic opportunity. But the march was also a success because Rustin made sure the details were right. We are now relatively blasé about the idea of large numbers of people converging on Washington. In 1963, it created great apprehension. Would the march really be peaceful? How did the organizers propose to get 100,000 protesters into the city and out again on the same day? Anderson reports that one policeman said it took nearly a year to get ready for an inaugural parade—and Rustin had only seven weeks to organize every detail of this march. There could be no greater tribute to Rustin's skill than the fact that no one ever comments on the logistics of the march—only on its enormous success.

With the passage of the civil rights and voting rights legislation, Rustin believed it was time to change course and move, as he put it in one of his articles, "From Protest to Politics." Street protest had achieved what it could. The remaining problems were social and economic and required political solutions. Rustin believed that the best future for African-Americans lay in building coalitions with others who also opposed injustice and racism and who wanted to work for a society in which everyone had a decent education and a chance for a decent job. A staunch integrationist, he opposed the new movement toward racial separatism, and he continued to insist that racism is evil, no matter who is the victim. These were not popular positions, and many of his old comrades accused him of being an Uncle Tom and worse. But Rustin was never one to stick his finger up to see which way the wind was blowing.

In a commencement address to Tuskegee students in 1970, Rustin described the kind of society he envisioned:

> ...an integrated social order in which black people, proud of their race and heritage, shall have no door closed to them.
>
> In such a social order there will no longer be walls, representing fear and insecurity, to separate people from one another. Such walls, whether constructed by whites or by blacks, are built to oppress and repress, but never to liberate. I admit that most likely we will not achieve such equality next month, or next year, or even in this decade. But it is a goal that we must hold ever before us...for it not only confers dignity upon our struggle, but it should indicate to us how we must act toward one another today if we are to preserve for tomorrow the possibility of a just society.

Jervis Anderson's book reminds us of how much we have lost.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address Mr. Shanker at AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1997 by Albert Shanker. Visit the AFT web site (http://www.aft.org).

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leaders and community organizers behind it, Goldberg's living wage measure is the result.

Is it a good idea? At first glance, the "living wage" fight replays many of the *reductio ad absurdum* arguments made famous in the minimum wage wars. Capital shouts that if $7.25 an hour is good, why not make it $20, or $50? Labor answers that if a decent wage floor is so intolerable, why not call for a return to child labor and sweatshops—or, for that matter, slavery?

But unlike the minimum wage, which applies to everyone, the "living wage" would mainly affect employees of city contractors who now earn less than $7.25 an hour. That turns out to be just 7,500 people. The measure thus redistributes income to these low-paid workers, either from taxpayers or contractors or both. If city contractors can pass the higher costs along, taxpayers will pay $30-40 million yearly, mostly to cover the new health benefits. But if, as anecdotal evidence suggests, many city contractors are making a killing, they can probably be forced to simply eat the new raises.

Proponents add that raising wages and benefits will save taxpayers money by shaving Food Stamp and Medicaid costs. They're right, but that doesn't help the local political equation, since the savings come from state and federal programs, while any new cost is borne by the city. Moreover, such reductions in means-tested benefits ensure that, for every dollar in higher wages the ordinance brings, only 50 cents may end up in workers' pockets. This, plus the fact that many of those who would benefit are not the city's poorest, leads opponents to claim, fairly, that the living wage is badly targeted. And it's likely that unskilled workers worth less than $7.25 to contractors will have trouble getting entry-level jobs.

If all this makes it sound like Los Angeles's living wage wouldn't do much to affect many lives, that's right—and the sad truth is, that's what will probably get the living wage enacted in L.A., even over the expected Riordan veto. If you find this a strange rallying cry for a movement, at least it's right for the times. And the living wage movement activists know this; listening to them define what a living wage would do, it is clear that, for now, they too have learned to live with the politics of symbolism. "It puts the arguments and the message out there as a handle to move the debate forward," says Madeline Janis-Aparicio, who heads L.A.'s Living Wage Coalition.

At least the Los Angeles City Council has an excuse for succumbing to symbolic politics. UCLA Professor Rick Sanders estimates it would take $1.6 billion to bring L.A.'s poor up to the poverty line. That figure represents more than half the total city budget. The living wage bill may not do much, but, at between zero and $40 million, it doesn't cost much, either. If you want to do more, it costs more, and the cost is something that has to be spread out. It takes a nation, not a village, to provide income support for America's concentrated pockets of working poor. Bill Clinton knew this once; his big boost to the earned income tax credit in 1993 may have been his finest hour. But even after that increase of $10 billion, 12 million Americans still dwell in poverty despite living in homes headed by a full-time worker.

Pleading fiscal constraint, President Clinton plans no repeat of 1993's bold move. It will take a newer Democrat than Clinton to realize that, with the feds still spending more than 20 percent of GDP, a president can do much, much more. But it may also take a lot more cities like L.A. crying for help before the crisis of the working poor lands back in Washington, where it belongs. •

What I saw at the coat revolution.

CLOAKS & DAGGERS

By Jonathan Chait

I showed up at the Omni Shoreham Hotel at 4:00 in the afternoon to work as a coat-checker for the Caribbean, New Jersey and Gay & Lesbian Inaugural Balls. Coat-checking allows you to experience all the inaugural's glamour and pageantry—dressing up, occupying the same building as the president—except that instead of shelling out $150 you get paid $6 an hour plus tips. Also, you don't get the food or the drinks or the dancing or the opportunity to interact with anybody except other coat-checkers. And in the end, as it turns out, you get attacked by a mob screaming for your blood, and you get roughed up by large policemen.

The afternoon begins inauspiciously. My friend Rob (who agreed to join me) and I make it into the ballroom without facing any security precautions—background checks, metal detectors, etc.—whatsoever. The company that hired us, McM, had promised a staff of fifty to handle the more than 5,000 expected customers, but only twenty coat-checkers arrive. My co-workers, who had all worked for McM before, confide that the company takes half the tip pool for itself, in apparent violation of our contract. And before any guests even show up, Rob manages to misplace his own coat. "A bad sign," he notes, "considering that this is now my profession."

The coat-check room is a banquet hall approximately two-thirds the size of a football field. The staff divides up into taggers, who take the coats and affix numbered tags to them, and runners, who store the coats. In lieu of hangers or racks, we lay out the coats on long tables in stacks of three, arrayed numerically according to their coat-check number. Unfortunately (and this is of critical importance in understanding why, eventually, our well-heeled customers rose up against us) the tags do not come back to the runners in

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numerical order, which makes it hard to keep track of which coat is where.

8:15: The tables fill up. The coats pour in faster and faster. Unable to group them sequentially, runners toss them on the floor in piles. The line of customers seeking to check coats builds. As I wander off to the restroom I notice, down the hall, a "VIP Coatroom." A cheerful attendant relaxes in front of roughly five coats that occupy a tiny corner of one among many rows of empty tables.

9:15: The coatroom closes down in order to regroup. Earlier I had approached Rob with a plan: our labor was worth far more than $6 an hour to McM, which had invited crisis by skimping on staff. If we walked out, catastrophe would ensue, and McM would never check coats in this town again. I suggested that we use our leverage to bargain for higher wages, and he agreed. We now took advantage of the respite to propagandize the rank and file. Our technique was for me to sidle up to an unsuspecting colleague toiling away over a coat table and casually mention that McM was making a killing at our expense. Rob, just happening to wander by, would chime in his support using angry populist language—"You're getting shafted!"—of the sort usually frowned upon at the conservative economic think tank where he works as a research assistant. "I'm not trying to extract rents," he explains to me later. "I'm just trying to get my marginal product." Our agitation successfully riles up most of the runners. Alas, the taggers, who view themselves as a skilled elite, still identify more strongly with management than with the runners and hence remain difficult to radicalize.

9:30: As janitors march in to set up auxiliary coat tables, the throng around the door grows larger and more ornery. Before we can finish setting up the new tables, a Democratic National Committee staffer orders the coat room reopened. Ball-hopping customers begin demanding their garments. But because they aren't stored sequentially, locating them takes five to fifteen minutes. For every customer we help, ten more appear at the door. The situation grows exponentially more hopeless. With every minute that passes, we seem to be another five minutes behind. Customers demand to enter the coat room and recover their property personally. DNC staffers form a barrier at the door.

10:30: Any semblance of a line has disappeared. Hundreds of black-tied Democrats press up against the barricade, waving claim checks and cash and loudly threatening revenge at the hands of the lawyers and politicians to whom they have access. Some successfully talk their way into the back room, only to discover in horror that their fur coats are misplaced.

10:50: A customer at the door snaps a photograph of the sea of coats behind me. "Evidence?" I ask. She nods. The runners now take orders from walkie-talkie-toting DNC staffers, who are even less competent at coat-checking than McM. But, by now, there's probably nothing the DNC can do. The only way to avert total chaos is to distribute the coats about ten times faster. And the only way to do that would be to let customers in to find the coats themselves, which would invite anarchy. The system teeters on collapse.

11:50: The mob storms the barricades. Half a dozen customers shove their way past security before reinforcements plug the gaps. Movement in or out of the coatroom is no longer possible, a setback for staffers who need to use the restroom.

11:55: "You're about to have a coat riot here," warns a customer. This is a real threat. Coat riots, I had been told, are an enduring feature of inaugural balls. Police officers replace DNC staffers at the barricade. They bring a different perspective. The DNC considered the failure of guests to receive their garments the main problem, and the huge crowd a symptom. To the police, the crowd *is* the problem. Their solution is to order the crowd, via megaphone, to retreat—to which it shouts back, in unison, "No!"—and to force the door shut. The mob outside, unappeased by this solution, begins chanting, "We want our coats *NOW*!" The New Jerseyans and lesbians have patched up their differences in the face of a common foe. The police open the door again so they can megaphone more instructions. Cops begin screaming at runners not to give out any more coats. We defiantly toss the coats over the barricades to their owners. The crowd, now firmly siding with the runners against the police, cheers every successful completion.

12:45: The police crack down on coat smuggling. A customer tries to argue:
"Sir, it's just going to get worse," he pleads.
"No, it's not," an officer replies implausibly.
"It's gonna escalate."
"No it ain't."

1:00: Many of the taggers have fled. The DNC tries to round up the remaining staff. "Everyone on staff in the corner, now!" shouts one DNCer over and over. We gather in the corner. I hear cheers from the crowd, and look over to see more customers bursting through the police line. This distracts the police and the DNC, leaving the staff alone in the corner. Rob and I seize our chance to organize a strike. We don't have much to lose, anyway: the tip rate has plummeted. After a few minutes of debate, the runners authorize Rob and me to demand $20 an hour for everyone or else we walk. The manager sounds sympathetic, but has to discuss it with the owner, and his cellular phone is dead.

1:45: The police try a new method. A cop with a megaphone holds up one of the several thousand remaining coats and describes it, as if he's running an auction. The crowd laughs. He reads the claim num-

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ber, only to be drowned out by more shouting and chanting. The police decide to let in customers ten at a time to find their own garments. Our leverage collapses as the job is outsourced to the customers, who have less coat-checking experience but work for free. The Democratic Party has broken our union. Some runners help look through the piles, while others rest in the corner. An McM staffer informs us that we have to stay until the end—which looks to be several hours away—or else we don't get a share of the tip jar, which she controls. We haven't had a break in close to ten hours.

2:25: I have alternated interviewing customers about the conditions outside—the wait ranges from one to two hours—and helping them search. In front of the barricade appears a TNR colleague. "Are you going to write about this?" she shouts to me. The cops take notice of my notepad and ask if I'm a journalist. Yes, I reply, but I also work here. "Out," insists a cop. My boss will confirm that I work for McM, I maintain, but he doesn't care. He grabs my arm, twists it behind my back and forces me out the door. I tell him that I don't get a share of the tips if I leave early. He ignores me, so I repeat it several times. He shoves me into the hallway and threatens that if I try to get back in, "I'm gonna knock you on your ass."

Rob returns to the hotel the next day to reclaim a scarf he left behind in the confusion. One man negotiating for his garment angrily recounts that he left his keys in his coat pocket and had to spend the night at a friend's house, forcing him to miss a meeting the next morning. More than a hundred coats remain. •

Agape and apolitical at Rock the Vote.

ROCK THE MORONS

By Stephen Glass

Standing outside a chic Washington restaurant in the bitter cold, Bill Daiton is interviewing a slinky 19-year-old girl wearing a short cocktail dress. She's clearly annoyed by the 74-year-old man with his sunken eyes and tattered corduroy sport-coat, but avoiding him would mean losing her place in line for the Rock the Vote invite-only party. In his right hand, Daiton grips a clipboard from which he reads her seven questions. In his left, he holds a mechanical pencil. "Where are you from?" he asks. "Bethesda," she snaps between clicks of gum chewing. The retired schoolteacher asks her to name one of her senators. "Umm...." more gum-chewing noises. "Umm...." Fifteen seconds pass. "Do you know?" Daiton asks without apparent emotion. She says she doesn't. After one hair-flip, one eye-roll and two reapplications of lipstick, she admits she can't name the attorney general, thinks her congressman is Newt Gingrich and has no idea how many amendments there are to the Constitution. Daiton thanks her and moves to the next person in line. Five or six times a year for the past decade, he has driven from his rural Pennsylvania home to Washington to test America's political literacy. The results are "sad and grim," he says. Tourists at the "Lincoln Memorial averaged three and a half [out of six], same at the Vietnam Vets' and Jefferson. At the rehearsal for the inaugural gala, the numbers jumped up to four. But this, this, this one," he says, pointing a crooked middle finger at the doors of the Rock the Vote party. "This one was the worst ever. They averaged just one point one."

Rock the Vote was founded in 1990 as the answer to youth apathy. Concerned about court rulings deeming 2 Live Crew's rap lyrics obscene, recording heavyweights like Warner Bros. and Capitol Records funded the organization to boost youth voter registration. They signed up dozens of artists, including Madonna and R.E.M., to record public service announcements. MTV and radio stations in every big city donated millions of dollars in airtime. Stories in every major newspaper hawked the group's concerts and web site. Rock the Vote has been getting the same kind of heavy, respectful attention ever since.

And this is odd because the organization is a complete failure at its mission. Rock the Vote's 1996 registration drive netted only a little more than 500,000 new registrants—at a cost of ten times what the League of Women Voters spends per registration. According to the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, youth voter turnout in 1996 fell to below 30 percent, making it the worst year ever for young voters. (Even Rock the Vote's celebrity endorsers aren't always good at getting to the polls. In 1990, *Rolling Stone* found most of the stars—including Madonna, M. C. Hammer and Iggy Pop—didn't vote.) What Rock the Vote *has* turned out to be good at is providing a way for politically dim 24-year-olds to party with rock stars and for empty-headed celebrities to gain legitimacy by pretending they know something about politics.

Take pop singer Michael Bolton. Bolton has a special strut he adopts when he crosses from the cement sidewalk to the red carpet. With his shoulders back and his chest puffed out, he extends his right leg, plants his right foot fully, pauses, then lifts his left leg and brings it forward. As the tabloid photographers' flashes pop, Bolton's gait looks almost royal. Bolton has another mannerism of note. When he is asked questions by the press, he sometimes touches his hand to his chin, in the manner of Rodin's *The Thinker*. But the first queries don't take much thought. Are you enjoying yourself? "Yes." What would you tell the youth? "Get involved."

Why do you think 1996 saw the lowest youth turnout ever? "Sheesh ... wow ... it was?" He seems startled. "We have to do something about that."

Isn't that Rock the Vote's mission? "Oh. Oh, yeah,"

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Bolton remembers. He looks suddenly confused, his manner devolving from Rodin's *Thinker* to Rodin's *Duh*, and he walks swiftly, chestily away. Bolton's not alone in his confusion. Few at the Rock the Vote bash seem to have any idea that young people aren't voting. For that matter, not many people seem to have any idea that they are there to promote the idea of young people voting. "Look, the way I see it, this is a gig," Bob Davis, manager of the Squirrel Nut Zippers, says. "Earlier this week we were in Charlottesville, today it's here. Next it's Georgia. What did you say this Rock the Vote does?"

Later in the evening, Michael DeLorenzo from the Fox drama "New York Undercover" walks into the party, stopping to smile for the photographers. He, too, is shocked to hear that youth voter turnout was so low. "I didn't know that," DeLorenzo says. "Is that what this is about? Well, if it's true we gotta get on top of it."

At least the celebs are not alone in their cluelessness. Rock the Vote thrives on twentysomethings who go doe-eyed when they see music stars, but go blank when the subject turns to politics. The group's basic manual, its *Field Survival Guide* for volunteers, recognizes this with advice to recruiters that the easiest person to draw into the organization is "The Kid Who Wants To Be on MTV: They may make a great and energetic volunteer, sign 'em up for everything.... They will be your new best friend." By sharp contrast, the *Guide* ranks "partisans"—that is, people who have thought about politics long enough to choose a party—with felons, giving both categories a four out of a possible five as "very difficult" to register to vote or get involved in the organization.

These priorities show. Mingling in the hallways outside the party, dozens of twentysomethings talk about politics. Many admit, when pressed, that they didn't vote. Most say it was because they already knew Clinton was going to win. In one group near the coat-check, a half-dozen friends from New York discuss the welfare bill. Jessica Baron riles up several friends with a monologue criticizing the bill, saying it was unfairly harsh on minorities. A friend—and the only one who has never been to a Rock the Vote event before—tells Baron that her argument loses credibility since she didn't vote. "It doesn't matter that I didn't vote," Baron yells back. "They shouldn't be able to do it. I don't understand your point. You don't not matter when you don't vote."

In another group near the check-in desk, two California women are in a swelter of confusion over the identities of Federico Peña and Leon Panetta. They keep saying they can't wait for Peña to run against their governor, Pete Wilson. The most telling moment, though, comes when Massachusetts Senator John Kerry walks past Harvey Keitel. A dozen fans run past Kerry and several bump into him in their headlong pursuit of Keitel. Only one notices the senator, but he mistakes him for Nebraska Senator *Bob* Kerrey.

AN INAUGURAL SCENE BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

After Keitel leaves, Jewel—an up-and-coming young pop singer—exits the party slowly, happy to take press questions. The 22-year-old is among Rock the Vote's most active celebrities. She recorded three public service announcements, including a twenty-two-second bite: "I'm not afraid to make my own decisions. I'm not afraid to exercise my rights and you shouldn't be either.... Let politicians know what you know. Rock the Vote."

As she leaves she admits she didn't vote in the primary since she was out of the country and forgot to get an absentee ballot. Then she's asked why young people don't vote.

"They're totally out of touch," she says.

Right, but why is that?

"They don't have any confidence in their spiritual leaders. Like Tammy Faye."

How does that relate to politics?

"It's all interrelated. Their views aren't fully formed."

Do you have any fully formed views?

"No. None. My views on everything are always changing."

No issues—say, a woman's right to vote—are solid in your mind?

"No. No. I don't think so. I'm still learning." •

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Good policy, schlock TV and Clinton's genius.

CLINTONISM, THE MOVIE

By Carl M. Cannon

Republicans who listened to the emotionally evocative but substantively light exercise that constituted Bill Clinton's second inaugural address could be forgiven if they sat in their seats wondering, "How did we lose to this guy?" The answer was not to be found in the speech. It was to be found, instead, in a made-for-television movie shown on CBS the night after the inauguration. *A Child's Wish* is a historical first, the first time a president of the United States has played himself in a movie. It is also a historical artifact. For in it, and in the circumstances surrounding it, Clinton's political genius is revealed. Governing is, first of all, about who gets to govern, and elections, which decide that question, turn more on the inspired use of symbols than on the substance of policy. Five presidents in the modern era have understood this: Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton. Of these, Clinton may have the greatest grasp of symbolism; his is certainly the most expansive. No president has ever had a better natural ear for picking out of the cacophony of politics and policy those gestures, words and images that will most resonate with voters. And no president has ever been more determined and systematic in his exploitation of those symbols.

If this calls to mind the ways of the Reagan White House, that is not, of course, an accident. The Clinton team studied the Reagan operation in detail before taking office in 1993, and they have always had the highest professional regard for it, to the point of modeling Clinton's 1996 re-election campaign on Reagan's 1984 "Morning in America" run. For the Clintonites, like the Reaganites, grasped what policy intellectuals and political theorists rarely do: namely, that people want to believe in symbols. There is no way most voters can familiarize themselves with the arcana of every piece of legislation or presidential proposal and pick out whose facts and figures are demonstrably right. So, rationally enough, they select a few symbolic issues and use them to decide if a politician is on their side.

Thus, for example, while Democrats, reporters and academics all bemoaned Reagan's reliance on unproven stories of Cadillac-driving welfare queens, voters understood that Reagan was trying to communicate, through the shorthand of symbols, a big idea: that he, like them, regarded the welfare system as corrupt and wrong, and that he believed it should be changed.

Clinton, likewise, knows better than his debunkers what matters to the voters. And so, when the White House press corps writes that the president did not really put 100,000 cops on the street—it's more like half that number, and the funding for those cops is slated to run out while Clinton is still in office—the president responds by holding a South Lawn event in which he pins medals on a group of heroic police officers hired under his program. Then the cops get up and tell their stories into the cameras, how they stopped this robbery and that rape, and the debunkers are trumped once again. The cops' stories illustrate the big idea of the Clinton presidency: that government can make better, in concrete ways, the daily lives of working people. Like Reagan's welfare queens, Clinton's 100,000 cops are at least partially a myth. But behind both symbols is an idea that people accept as real and true.

Ostensibly, *A Child's Wish* is a tearjerker about a dying little girl whose last wish is to come to the capital and see the White House. Actually, it is two hours of propaganda extolling the virtues of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, the first legislation signed into law by Clinton. In his cameo appearance, Clinton comes across as empathetic and sweet. And why not? He was that way in real life when the events that inspired the movie took place.

The Family and Medical Leave Act was not a Clinton bill. It was cobbled together by the Women's Legal Defense Fund and other feminist groups long before Clinton came to Washington. It was a sensible, humane, small piece of legislation. It simply guaranteed that Americans, except those working for companies with less than fifty employees, could take up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave upon the birth or adoption of a child, to care for a family member who was seriously ill or to recover from their own serious illness—without being fired when they tried to return. For the families protected by this law, it has been a godsend, but as federal proposals go it was fairly modest in scope. It cost the Treasury nothing, was already widely in use in the workplace and, in fact, had already been enacted into law in

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twelve states. (In nine additional states, similar laws covered state employees only.)

For reasons best known only to himself, President Bush vetoed this bill in 1990, even though it enjoyed bipartisan support and had passed Congress by large margins. Bush heeded the reflexive opposition of the Chamber of Commerce and other conservative business groups who predicted the law would be one more regulatory burden on American industry. Polls from the time showed that Americans didn't see it that way at all. To voters, this issue was an easy call: those who were for the bill were putting families first, to use one phrase. Those opposed to it were putting business first.

In 1992, the Democratic Congress passed, as close to Election Day as it could manage, a second Family and Medical Leave Act. Again, Bush vetoed it, to the consternation of moderate Republicans. As governor, Clinton had never even proposed a family leave law—Arkansas was not one of the states that had one—but he recognized the symbolic value of the national bill immediately and was lying in wait when Bush stepped into the ambush. "He's telling the American people we can't have a law that seventy other countries have," Clinton told voters. One "that all of our major competitors take for granted, a law that would support family values about as much as any law and would be good for the workplace." Between Clinton's election and Bush's departure from the White House, the new Congress hurriedly passed a third family leave bill. It was waiting for the president on his first day at work.

Soon enough, Clinton was mentioning the bill in nearly every big speech. By October of 1993 he was accompanying these references with a moving anecdote about the father of a dying girl who took time off from work—time he was granted only because of the Family and Medical Leave Act signed by Clinton himself. "Don't think what you do isn't important here," Clinton quoted the girl's father as telling him. "It is." Because none of his top aides could provide anything in the way of details to flesh it out, the story had a Reaganesque sound to it, which is to say, it sounded apocryphal. As it turns out, it was true, and it truly reflected what Bill Clinton thought about the role of government when he got to Washington.

In the spring of 1992, as Clinton was wrapping up the Democratic nomination, down on the Gulf Coast a young girl named Melissa Weaver was getting ready to run track at her school in Port Lavaca, Texas. But Melissa's leg became swollen, and the local doctor, puzzled about her condition, referred her to a specialist in Houston, 130 miles away. A subsequent biopsy found a form of tumor so rare it took a week to identify. Melissa, at age 10, had cancer.

Melissa's mother, Rosemarie Weaver, a teacher, took six weeks off from her job, a leave later extended by a year. She undertook the job of driving to and from Texas Children's Hospital and holding Melissa's hand during the next year and a half of chemotherapy and radiation and a series of operations. The girl's father, Kenneth Weaver, a technician in a cement plant, found himself spending most of his off-work hours caring for the couple's two younger girls, Michelle and Melinda.

Melissa Weaver, "Missy" to her family, turned 11 the day Clinton was inaugurated for the first time. Her family had voted Republican in the past—Kenny Weaver particularly had admired George Bush—but the Weavers didn't vote for Bush the second time around. During the 1992 campaign, word of the family leave bill reached little Port Lavaca. Kenny and Rosemarie discussed the matter one night; they realized the bill was intended to help people like them, and they couldn't fathom why Bush wouldn't sign it. "President Bush had a little girl who was sick," Rosemarie recalled recently. "He lost a daughter, too, like us.... "

In September of 1993, the Weavers learned that Melissa's cancer had spread to other organs. Kenny went to his bosses, told them about the new law and said he was planning to take twelve weeks off. His foreman consulted the home office, which ruled that the new law did indeed give Kenneth Weaver the right to time off, and recommended that he be welcomed back with open arms when he returned. The family also got in touch with the local Make-a-Wish chapter. Melissa, who had just read *The Diary of Anne Frank*, wanted to see the newly opened Holocaust museum in Washington, so Make-a-Wish decided to send her to the capital. And as long as she was going there, the folks at the foundation thought, perhaps she could get in to see the president.

Eventually, after a good deal of trouble, Make-a-Wish found a helpful White House aide who told the Houston Make-a-Wish people to bring Missy by on a Sunday after the president finished jogging. On September 26, 1993, Melissa Weaver, sitting in her wheelchair, was placed in Clinton's path. The president went back upstairs to the residence, changed clothes and came back down to pose for pictures and hold Melissa's hand. And, just as in Clinton's anecdote, the little girl's father did explain to Clinton that he needed this time with his dying daughter, but didn't want to have to choose between spending Melissa's last days with her and jeopardizing the family's economic future. And that thanks to the law the president signed, he didn't have to.

It is undeniable that Clinton has made wildly exaggerated claims for his role in the family leave legislation—and for the sweep of its impact. He stated flatly on the 1996 campaign trail that because he signed it, some 15 million Americans have gotten time off when they needed it most. The actual figure is a small fraction of that number. But the fact of the Family Medical Leave Act is true, and it is true that the law Clinton signed that Bush wouldn't did immeasurable good for the people whom it did help. It is true that this says something about Clinton. And it is, finally, true that Clinton has exploited these truths for their symbolic value to the greatest extent he could. Which is why *A Child's Wish* is doubtless coming soon to a video rental near you. And which is why Bill Clinton was inaugurated for a second term this week. •

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THE SECOND RUBIN ADMINISTRATION

By John B. Judis

The best indication of the shape of Bill Clinton's second-term economic policy came a week after his re-election. In a press conference on November 12, the president was asked whether he favored a balanced budget amendment. "I don't believe we need it," he said. "But if we have it, it ought to be able to be implemented in a way that actually works and gives the country what it needs to manage a recession.... If the escape hatch is good, then we'll manage it the best way we can."

Several of Robert Rubin's aides, who were watching the press conference, rushed into the Treasury Secretary's office to warn him that the president had waffled on his opposition to the amendment. Rubin immediately went to see the president and got his permission to set the record straight. Rubin's aides called reporters to offer an interview with the Treasury Secretary, who repeated the same message to each. "The president's position has not changed," Rubin said. "We will actively oppose [the amendment] if it's proposed. He's very much in favor of going to a balanced budget, but a balanced budget amendment isn't going to cut the deficit by one nickel. What it does is create a constitutional inflexibility that can be very dangerous."

This incident was little noticed and already has largely been forgotten, but it brought to light what are likely to be abiding features of Clinton's second term. Buffeted by political winds, and facing a hostile Republican Congress, the president will waver on a host of key economic questions—from adopting the balanced budget amendment to granting capital gains tax reductions. When he wavers, Rubin will reassert his leadership over the administration's economic policy. Around town, consultants and lobbyists who specialize in economic issues refer to the next four years as the "second Rubin administration." How did Rubin, a political neophyte when Clinton appointed him to head the newly created National Economic Council in December 1992, gain such pre-eminence? And what will his leadership mean for Clinton's second term?

In most administrations, economic policy usually runs on separate domestic and foreign tracks. The people who dominate decisions over budgets and taxes aren't the same people who manage trade negotiations. In the Bush administration, Budget Director Richard Darman had very little to say about trade with Japan, and U.S. Trade Representative Carla Hills had nothing to say about the budget. But by the end of 1995, Rubin had assumed control over both aspects of the Clinton administration's economic policy. It didn't happen all at once, but in phases.

The former investment banker first put his mark on domestic economic policy when the administration began drawing up a budget in January 1993. The main players in this primal deliberation were: Rubin, Secretary of the Treasury Lloyd Bentsen, Director of the Office of Management and Budget Leon Panetta, and Secretary of Labor Robert Reich. Also participating were Laura Tyson, head of the Council of Economic Advisers, and Alice Rivlin, the deputy budget director. Rubin, Bentsen, Panetta and Rivlin—the so-called "gang of four"—successfully argued against Reich and Tyson, making the case for deficit reduction rather than public investment and for cutting $140 billion rather than $120-135 billion from the Bush administration's projected budget. Rubin also argued successfully against framing the administration's tax increases in populist soak-the-rich terms.

Within the "gang of four," Bentsen carried the most weight in administration deliberations, but Rubin ended up defining the administration's economic philosophy. Rubin believed that, in order to sustain the tentative recovery, the administration had to pay close attention to how Wall Street and corporate managers reacted to its policies. While Reich and Tyson contended that deficit reduction could imperil the recovery, Rubin insisted that if the deficit were not significantly reduced, bond traders, fearing new inflation, would raise interest rates and choke off the recovery. He also argued that if the administration hurled rhetorical fusillades at business and the rich it would undermine their confidence in the future and their willingness to invest.

In the wake of the disastrous 1994 elections, Rubin emerged—partly by default—as the administration's top economic policymaker. He had taken Bentsen's post after the latter resigned. Panetta, who had become chief of staff, was no longer immediately involved in economic policy. And Tyson, who succeeded Rubin at the NEC, had fallen under the Treasury Secretary's sway.

continued on page 25

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Babies born in the 21st century

may still develop diseases like asthma,

diabetes and multiple sclerosis.

Pfizer

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But they may not have to live with them.

As the millennium approaches, we stand at the threshold of a dramatic turning point in the history of medicine.

It's the genetic era. And within the lifetime of our children, its developments could provide us with the keys to conquer many of today's most threatening diseases. The reason for such optimism? The genetic era signals a quantum leap in our understanding of the body and of disease.

Until recently, medical research has taken three main directions: to develop treatments that kill disease-causing microbes; to chemically influence diseased tissues; or to develop surgical techniques to remove or repair damaged organs and tissues.

For the most part, we haven't been able to fully overcome our disease enemies. The great exception is our victory over many infections through antibiotics.

What we have learned is how to manage or treat illness, allowing people with diseases like hypertension and diabetes to live longer, healthier lives.

Now, with our first real understanding of the human body's genetic programming, comes a real chance at real cures.

At Pfizer, a world leader in biomedical research and development, the excitement is palpable. "We are entering a truly revolutionary period in which insights derived from genetic research will shine a powerful light on the root causes of disease," says Dr. Arthur Franke, who heads Pfizer's molecular biology research in neuroscience. As high school biology students learn, genes determine

1347
Bubonic plague blamed on vapors rising from earth

1600s
"Royal Touch" thought to cure tuberculosis; monarchs mobbed

1796
Discovery of smallpox vaccine

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such physical characteristics as hair and eye color, height and weight range. We now know that genes also determine whether we are likely

to develop a range of dangerous and potentially fatal diseases. Our genes play a role in deciding whether we will be susceptible to colon cancer, despite eating low-fat diets and exercising until we drop. Or whether we will be able to gorge on ice cream, chain-smoke and die in our sleep at 90.

Today, an important portion of Pfizer's $1.7 billion R&D budget is spent on genetic research. The reason is obvious: **If genetic coding can cause disease or encourage it to develop, genetic therapy could prevent or cure disease.**

At Pfizer laboratories in the U.S., Europe and Japan, genetic research focuses on understanding the genetics of disease processes – exactly which genes give instructions that create or enable disease, how they do it, and how they might be stopped. "The way we can really use the genetic revolution is to study the genes that are expressed in diseased tissue, compare them to gene expression in normal tissue, and develop a medication to block the actions of the genes found only in the diseased tissue," says Michael Fogliano, Manager of Molecular Sciences at Pfizer.

Genetic research is pointing Pfizer scientists to the types of therapies that once might have seemed like science fiction.

Some examples?

Cancer treatments that will turn off the genetic mechanism instructing cancer cells to divide, without poisoning healthy cells nearby.

Antibiotics that will specifically target bacterial genes necessary for disease survival.

It's real hope for real cures.

To families who have watched generation after

1842	1918	1920s	1928	1929	1944
Ether's introduction allows surgery without torturous pain	Flu pandemic kills more Americans than any war before or since	Average U.S. life expectancy is 54	Alexander Fleming discovers penicillin in a moldy lab dish	DNA identified in cell nuclei	First ever mass-produced penicillin, from Pfizer, protects WWII GIs

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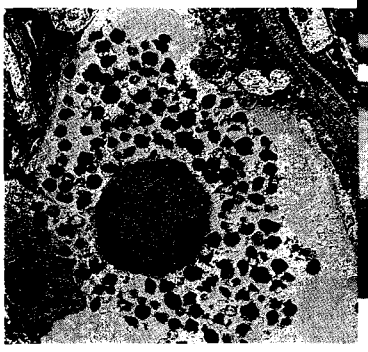
generation of children give themselves daily insulin shots, **it is the promise of liberation from a life-threatening cycle.**

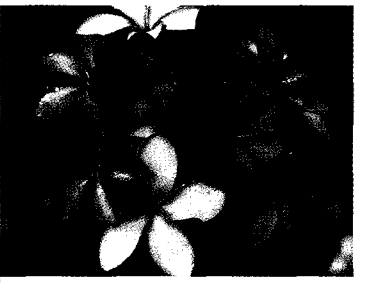
To sons whose fathers fell to heart attacks in middle age, it means new hope.



And to people living in fear of congenital multiple sclerosis or cystic fibrosis, it's the dream that their fears will end.

Medical progress is the source of all these hopes. And what makes it possible is a tremendous commitment of time and resources from Pfizer and other leading research companies.

"We are driven by the knowledge that our work today could end or prevent suffering for millions of people tomorrow," says Dr. Ian Williams, who heads



molecular science research at Pfizer. "Pfizer researchers go to work each day knowing that they are contributing to an effort that could change the world for their own children and for the generations to come."

Pfizer

We're part of the cure.

http://www.pfizer.com

1955	1970s	1990s				
Polio vaccine makes iron lung obsolete	First report of AIDS and Ebola	Top 8 killers of 1920s cause few if any deaths today	Average U.S. life expectancy is 76	Cancer is target of 215 drugs in development	First time scientists crack full genetic code of a disease organism	Pharmaceutical industry invests nearly $2 million an hour in research

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But Rubin also achieved his pre-eminence because Clinton, after the 1994 election, had become more firmly convinced that populist appeals did not work and more determined to court business's favor—for political as well as economic ends.

Of Rubin's former rivals, only Reich remained. The Secretary of Labor retained some influence over Clinton's rhetoric, but, when he tried to change the overall direction of administration economic policy, Rubin, with Tyson's help, successfully countered him. He first did so in November 1994, when Reich advocated cutting "corporate welfare" from the budget to make room for more public investment, and then again in February 1996, when Reich proposed granting tax breaks to good "corporate citizens" who retrained their workers rather than firing them. Rubin rejected both ideas as anti-business. Clinton, who had flirted with Reich's notions, eventually took Rubin's side. Now, as Rubin begins a second term at Treasury, Reich, Panetta and Tyson are gone. Rubin is not merely first among equals; he is simply unequaled, the last giant standing on domestic economic policy.

Rubin followed a similar, but less direct, path in winning control over the administration's foreign economic policy. Initially, he shared power over trade and monetary issues with a fairly large group of advisers: Bentsen, Tyson, Lawrence Summers (who was Bentsen's Treasury Undersecretary for International Affairs), U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor, Commerce Secretary Ron Brown and Deputy Treasury Secretary Roger Altman. In the first two years, Rubin played an important role in making passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement an administration priority and in convincing the administration to grant China Most Favored Nation trading status, in spite of its human rights record. But he took a back seat to Kantor, Tyson and Altman in developing the administration's trade strategy. When Clinton and Kantor adopted a "results-oriented" trade strategy with Japan, demanding that Japan meet specific numerical targets in reducing its surplus with the U.S., Rubin merely acquiesced, while Summers, who viewed the trade deficit with Japan as inconsequential, privately dissented. Says one administration trade appointee, "Rubin's position in the beginning was fairly hard-nosed, but Larry's position was that the trade deficit was good for us."

When Rubin became Treasury Secretary in 1995, he elevated Summers to be his deputy. He also moved closer to Summers's position on the trade deficit and on the fractious trade disputes with Japan. Together, they began to assume control of the administration's monetary policy by managing the Mexican peso bailout. But trade policy was still dominated by the White House and the U.S. Trade Representative. That spring, Clinton, spurred by Kantor and by consultant Dick Morris, demanded that Japan agree to numerical targets on auto parts imports. Summers particularly doubted the ploy would work. On the eve of the negotiations deadline, Clinton and Kantor, faced with Japanese intransigence and growing dissent from General Motors, backed down from their demands. The result was an economic failure and a public relations disaster, especially abroad.

Clinton and Kantor's failure spelled the end of the "results-oriented" trade strategy and of a strong White House and U.S. Trade Representative hand in trade. Control of trade policy and of economic relations between the U.S. and Japan passed to Rubin and Summers. Soon afterwards, the two took the most important step in U.S.-Japan relations. They agreed to help the dollar, valued as low as 79 yen in March 1995, rise in value—a move that forestalled a Japanese bank crisis, but that is already pushing up the trade deficit by making American goods more expensive in Japan and Japanese goods cheaper here. (See "Dollar Foolish," TNR, December 9, 1996.) Rubin and Summers will have to deal with the consequences, which could include the collapse of their dollar strategy, virtually alone. Kantor and Tyson have resigned. Acting U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky is regarded merely as a negotiator. And Commerce Secretary-designate William Daley has no expertise in international trade. Again, on trade as well as on economic policy, Rubin is the last man standing.

With Clinton's backing, Rubin has now taken full charge of the administration's economic policy. Remarkably enough, he has done so without creating enemies. Says one White House adviser who knows Rubin and Reich, "There is no animus between them." A rarity among public officials, Rubin does not make his disagreements personal and is not especially territorial. Those who have observed him say that his triumph resulted from a paradox of personality. He won power partly as a result of not seeking it for its own sake.

Rubin's ascendancy is sometimes mistaken for evidence that the administration has moved irrevocably to the right. The truth is more complex. On social welfare and urban issues and on the capital gains tax cuts, Rubin is probably to the left of the administration. Bob McIntyre, director of the labor-backed Citizens for Tax Justice, contrasts Rubin with Clinton's White House aides. "Rubin is on our side. He is our guy," McIntyre says. Rubin is probably best described as an Eastern, pro-business New Deal Republican, a political type that was still common about thirty years ago when Rubin entered Wall Street, but has since disappeared. To best understand where Rubin stands, and where the second Clinton administration will head, you have to look at how his positions on major economic issues differ from those of the dominant political types in today's Washington.

Take, first, the balanced budget. You can find three different views of budget deficits in Washington: first, the classical view that they are bad under any circumstance and should be outlawed through a constitutional amendment; second, the Keynesian view that, in the normal absence of full employment, budget deficits can create the demand to put underutilized human and industrial resources to work; third, the neo-classical view that during a recession, but only then, budget deficits

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can get the economy moving again. Conservative Republicans are generally classicists and liberal Democrats Keynesians. Rubin sometimes sounds like a classic budget-balancer, but in fact he takes a neo-classical view of deficits. He enthusiastically embraces the goal of a balanced budget by 2002, but rejects the amendment. Deficits are justified "for short periods of time," Rubin told me in an interview. "But you want structural balance."

On capital gains tax cuts, another issue of litmus-test importance to conservatives and to many of Rubin's former colleagues on Wall Street, the Treasury Secretary again breaks the mold. Conservative Republicans like House Ways and Means Chairman Bill Archer claim that by increasing the incentive to invest in stocks and bonds, cuts in capital gains tax rates will fuel real investment in plants, equipment and workers. Rubin rejects this argument. "Lowering capital gains has very little effect on savings and very little on the economy, and if that's true, why should we spend federal money on it?" he says. Moreover, though he's a former banker, Rubin is capable of taking the broader view that what is good for Wall Street is not necessarily good for the economy. He is worried about the excessive movement in today's stock market and skeptical of a tax cut that will accelerate it. "I do think that there is a tendency not to pay attention to risk or volatility these days in view of the behavior of the stock market during the last fifteen years," he says. By contrast, conservative Republicans like Archer represent the narrow worldview of the brokers or hedge fund operators who identify the size of their commissions with the welfare of the country.

On trade and the dollar, Rubin's position is most clearly opposed to liberal and populist Democrats. Minority Leader Dick Gephardt and other congressional Democrats worry that the persistent U.S. trade deficit with Asia is eroding the country's manufacturing base, but Rubin and Summers take the view that the current trade deficit—around $110 billion this year—is insignificant. "I am not particularly worried about it," says Rubin. "It has come down as a percentage of GDP, although it is persistent. So much depends on what you think is really happening. If you have a high-unemployment economy, then you worry about it. If you have a low-unemployment economy, which we have now, then that issue isn't on the table." Summers concurs. "In some ways," he says, "the trade deficit is a measure of our strength. We are growing; that means bringing in imports. Europe and Japan are growing much less rapidly, therefore bringing in fewer imports."

Rubin and Summers's differences with the Democrats aren't just theoretical. Gephardt and the House Democrats want to use sanctions to force Japan and China to open their markets and are opposed to further free trade agreements. Rubin and Summers are likely to downplay disagreements with Japan and China. They favor admitting China to the World Trade Organization, where it will be immune from U.S. trade sanctions. And they want Congress to grant fast-track authority so the U.S. can sign a new free trade pact with Chile.

But is Rubin, then, a New Democrat? In administration debates on welfare, Rubin has consistently sided with a quintessentially Old Democratic figure, Donna Shalala, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, against New Democrat and Domestic Policy Council Director Bruce Reed. Rubin wanted Clinton to veto the welfare bill because he felt that its funding cuts for the Food Stamps program and Medicaid were too drastic. In recent administration debates about the 1998 budget, Rubin and Shalala have fought to increase new funding for welfare recipients from $5 billion—Reed's number—to $15 billion. In sum, under Rubin's leadership, the second Clinton administration can be expected to frustrate Republican demands for capital gains tax cuts and a balanced budget amendment, liberal Democratic demands for a tougher trade policy and New Democratic demands for a leaner, tougher welfare state. In its ambidexterity, it will be much like the first Clinton administration.

There is one final matter that must be considered in gauging what Rubin and the Clinton administration will do over the next four years. That is the lingering question of the recession. Rubin's current policy prescriptions are based not so much on theory as on the assumption that a recession is not looming. If it were, then he would have to worry about trade and the strong dollar and about reducing consumer demand too sharply through budget cuts. But, like many other Clinton administration officials, Rubin has become convinced that economic history is on his side.

Rubin insists that he is a pessimist, but he is a blithe optimist about the state of the American economy. Says Rubin, "I think the most likely scenario far and away is a continuation of solid growth and low inflation as far into the future as you feel comfortable in making this kind of judgment." Summers, according to close associates, thinks that the administration may have actually found the key to eliminating recessions altogether, but he won't go that far on the record. "I think the healthy person is one who doesn't know what he is going to die of. In that sense the expansion is healthy. I think that's because we have put in place the right kind of policies," he says.

Rubin and Summers may be right, but, in the past, the best time to expect a recession has been when policymakers and economists declared that none was in sight. In October 1989, for example, Bush administration economist Michael Boskin declared, "We see no reason why a recession is likely to occur." Two years later a recession was in full swing. By that rule of thumb, Rubin and Summers could be looking at rising unemployment in 1999, and the Clinton administration, now so sure of itself, could be surveying the wreckage of its economic program. There are even some highly placed heretics in the Clinton administration who share this fear, but they won't be quoted by name. Said one, "When the recession comes, what happens to all the mysteries surrounding the great Clinton miracle, and what happens to the balanced budget by 2002?" It's a good question, and one Robert Rubin hopes he will never have to answer. •

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THE HARD QUESTIONS

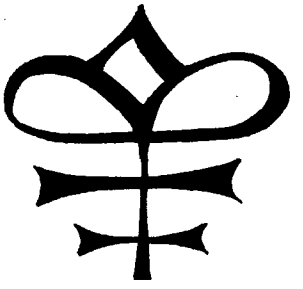
The bad news

After imbibing Bill Clinton's content-free, feel-good inaugural address, one might assume that the "land of new promise" lies just a piece down the yellow brick road. And it's true, some of the signs seem promising: unemployment, inflation and crime are down, economic growth is steady and the stock market is giddy with visions of perpetual prosperity. But none of this will last much into the next millennium if some ominous forces are not confronted. The first is the steady increase of income inequality among Americans; the second is the large-scale immigration of unskilled workers; and the third is runaway globalization of the international economy. Together they pose a more formidable challenge to social cohesion than the Soviets ever did.

The growing gap between rich and poor. Economists often crow that our unemployment rate is half that of western Europe's, but usually neglect to add that this is directly related to low U.S. wages. Employers can afford to hire more workers because they pay them so little, offer so few benefits and can fire them at will. The decimation of the trade union movement, which offered some countervailing power, has made it easier for employers to suppress wage increases, even as profits rise. And few contracts still offer real job security. An increasing number of workers are now "temps," hired indirectly through the myriad of agencies that traffic in interchangeable human labor. Temporary employees work on a piece basis, without health or pension benefits, at or near the minimum wage. In my apartment building, a custodial employee with twenty-seven years of continuous service to the same residential management company was fired a few days before Christmas and replaced with a recently arrived immigrant hired through an agency for temps.

Over the past thirty years, America's rich and well-educated have gotten richer, and the poor poorer. Since 1990 the wealthiest 5 percent has increased its income by 16 percent, while the income of the bottom 20 percent has fallen by 5 percent. During the first two years of the Clinton administration, according to the Census Bureau, the top 5 percent increased its income at a faster rate than during the eight years of the Reagan administration. The wealthiest 1 percent of Americans now control one-third of the national wealth, i.e. about the same as that of the lowest 90 percent. The top 10 percent control two-thirds. Such income inequality, combined with America's traditional paucity of social benefits (now being reduced), is not a prescription for social stability.

Immigration. Of course this is a nation of immigrants. We can, and should, keep our doors open to the oppressed of other lands. But there is a difference between being a haven for those fleeing tyranny and being a hospitality center for the impoverished billions of the world. This distinction touches some delicate nerve endings, but it has to be made. When Congress changed the immigration laws in 1965 to emphasize family reunification above skills and training, a flood of legal immigrants followed. The share of total U.S. population growth accounted for by immigrants rose from 11 percent in the decade ending in 1970 to 39 percent two decades later.



This huge mass of unskilled workers drives down the price of labor. It is cheap to hire a janitor, gardener or maid—so cheap that unskilled Americans are often unwilling to work at such wages. Were the going rate for orderlies and street sweepers $12 an hour rather than $4, unskilled Americans would likely fill those jobs, as natives do in Europe. Employers would pay more, reducing profits, but the benefits to society—in terms of lower crime, less drug use and less alienation—would be great.

While the large-scale admission of unskilled immigrants is sold as humanitarianism, its primary effect is to create a cheap labor pool and render unskilled Americans unemployable. The high social cost is hidden behind a smoke screen of sentimentality. It is not mere coincidence that the unemployment crisis of the inner cities has intensified with the massive increase of unskilled immigrants. When the social costs are counted in, cheap immigrant labor is not cheap, and it is not fair.

Globalization. To listen to politicians, we are entering an exciting new period of innovation and abundance, in which the whole world is a stage, a marketplace and a workshop. Clinton promised last week that with the Internet we can "shape the forces of the information age and the global society to unleash the limitless potential of all our people." To drive home their point, the Democrats covered the Mall with tents full of talking computers. But they left some harder truths out. Globalization does not mean the end of scarcity, exploitation or the struggle for wealth. Nor does it mean the U.S. is going to become richer, although some corporations and individuals will. It means that capital can roam freely across the world in search of the most profitable place to invest. Capital seeks to maximize profits. This can be done in one of three ways: by controlling prices (monopolies and cartels), controlling sources of supply (imperialism) or controlling the cost of production, particularly wages. Cartels are unstable, and imperialism is usually not worth its cost. But wages can be controlled by increasing the supply of labor. Enter the global workshop.

There are about 250 million workers in the U.S. and western Europe earning an average of $85 a day, and about 90 million in the more developed countries of East Asia (excluding China) producing goods of equal quality for a few dollars a day. Under such circumstances, European and American corporations either flock east or use the threat of doing so to thwart demands for higher wages and benefits at home. And what will happen when Latin America, India, China and the rest of Asia pour another 1.2 billion workers into the global labor market? This represents, as Paul Kennedy has stated in the fall issue of *New Perspectives Quarterly*, "a colossal depressive force upon the real wages in the richer countries" with the likelihood that wages there "may tumble in some economic sectors by as much as 50 percent over the next two or three decades." The same point is developed in rich detail by William Greider in his new book, *One World, Ready or Not.*

To respond, as many economists do, that in the long run Third World standards will rise and make happy new consumers for U.S. products is not only wishful thinking, it ignores the likely political upheavals over the next decades as angry voters are drawn to nationalist and fundamentalist alternatives in response to the chaos of eroding markets and wages. Taken alone, great income inequality, mass immigration and uncontrolled globalization would be difficult even for an activist and unified government to manage. Together they make it unlikely that Bill Clinton, or anyone in his mold, can build a bridge, as he proclaims, "wide enough and strong enough for every American to cross over to a blessed land of promise."

RONALD STEEL

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Three in One

Who is Billy Bob Thornton? The question fascinates after seeing **Sling Blade** (Miramax), the extraordinary first film that he wrote and directed and in which he plays the leading role. It's a question that I hope will engage many; I hope, too, that a good deal of the answer lies in his future.

Thornton, it turns out, is an actor I've seen (Jarmusch's *Dead Man*, for instance) though I wasn't aware of it. He has frequently appeared on TV and has cowritten several screenplays (with Tom Epperson). He is an Arkansas native—this film was shot in rural Arkansas—and seems to be about 40. Nothing in his biographical data predicts the complete success of this eccentric, engrossing film.

Its only real flaw, not trivial, is the title. In an age when Hollywood herniates itself every week trying to outdo last week's action-violence peak, *Sling Blade* is a misleading title. A sling blade does figure in the story—apparently it's what in my farm days was called a corn-cutter, a small scythe blade with a short wooden handle, which allowed you to cut corn with one hand while you gathered it up with the other—but we don't actually see the tool or its use. The story has two episodes of violence, essential to it. One of them takes place long before the film begins, the other is hidden from our sight. The bulk of the film is a generally quiet journey from one episode to the other.

Thornton plays Karl, a fortyish man who, at the start, is released from the Arkansas mental hospital to which he was committed when he was 12 for the murders of his mother and her lover. He had never been completely right in the head: his parents had treated him almost like an animal, making him live in a shed behind the house. But evidently this hadn't affected his affection for them. The accidental sight of his mother lying down with a man who, thought Karl, was hurting her had set him ablaze. Now, after some twenty-five years, docile and slow, he is judged socially viable and is released.

The head of the hospital, a decent man, finds him a job in a fix-it shop. Karl is a whiz at mechanical repairs—lawnmowers, small appliances and the like—and he quickly proves his worth to his boss, who gives him a place to bunk in the shop. Karl has met a 10- or 11-year-old boy in the town, Frank, the son of a widowed mother, Linda, who works in a supermarket. Karl and Frank like each other; Linda also likes Karl, gives him a cot in her garage, and he becomes almost a member of the family. However, Linda has a lover, Doyle, who is around a lot and is much less friendly to Karl.

The ending of the film is visible as soon as all the pieces are in place. The only surprise is that the manager of the supermarket where Linda works is gay, suffering the usual harassments of gay men in small towns. He, too, is a member of Linda's "family," and he, too, is disliked by Doyle. But predictable though the ending is, the film is not concerned about it: Thornton and company concentrate on the texture of the journey to that ending.

Actors love to play impaired people, mentally or physically impaired or both. Simulating impairment is usually easy and easily wins praise. Very quickly in this film Thornton convinces us that he is interested in Karl as a human being, not in showing how cleverly he can play a slow-speaking, slow-moving man. Thornton soon creates a conviction of someone resident in Karl. Caught within that pigeon-toed, slightly round-shouldered, jut-jawed figure is a whole man trying to signal to us. Reconciled to his immured condition, all he wants from the world is the chance to make others aware of his capacity for feeling. Thornton uses every physical aid that he can summon to create the sense that what we see is not the whole of Karl. The way his body falls on one foot after another as he walks, the near-grotesquerie of some gestures are designed as a mime might do the role, Petrouchka without a theater.

But it's harder than mime, because Karl must speak. His speech is halting, never much varied in pitch or volume throughout his considerable range of emotions. Yet it is no metallic drone: it's the speech of a man for whom every word must be considered, brought forward, presented. Many of his utterances are followed by a small sound in his throat, as if in relief at getting the sentence out.

All these aspects are part of an individual, not a collection of effects. It's all the more impressive, then, to remember that Thornton also directed the film. (One odd moment. Early in the film he

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Hamlet. *Kenneth Branagh adapted and directed—and stars in a generally excellent cast. The production sometimes strains for novelty and effect but is nonetheless gripping. (Reviewed 1/27/97)* **One Fine Day.** *A 1930s screwball comedy in 1990s dress, and faring well. Michelle Pfeiffer and George Clooney as the couple who, of course, fight when they meet and get to know each other better. (1/20/97)* **The Portrait of a Lady.** *Henry James at the service of the feminist Jane Campion. Yet this account of a young American woman, encountering Europe a century ago, has rewards even in this version. (12/23/96)* **Some Mother's Son.** *Helen Mirren and Fionnula Flanagan as the mothers of two IRA sons in the hunger strike of 1981. Inevitably partisan, but inevitably moving. (12/30/96)*—**SK**

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glances sideways at the camera as he walks. I don't know why he left this shot in.) Members of the cast and crew have commented on the oddity of watching Thornton supervise the setting up of a shot, then seeing him step into Karl. Numberless actors have directed their own films. But the contrast between the acuity that a director needs and Karl's state of being is especially sharp.

His performance is so good that his directing may be slighted. His work is spare, suggestive, something like Hal Hartley's or Jim Jarmusch's. (Jarmusch plays a bit part in the picture.) For instance, Karl's first scene. We've learned that he's in this hospital and why, but we haven't yet met him. Then we see a patient sitting in profile in the foreground; next to him, facing us, is another patient telling him a story. Which is Karl? When it dawns on us that the silent one is Karl, we recognize that this is a director who understands space and focus. By being the silent one in this scene, Karl has forcefully "entered."

The cast is made up of professionals and others, but in Thornton's hands—a born neo-realist—they come out even. Among the pros are Jimmy Hampton, as the hospital head, John Ritter, who plays the gay man with defensive dignity, and Dwight Yoakam, Linda's lover who saves up his meanness for when he is drunk. Lucas Black and Natalie Canerday are adequate as Frank and Linda. Robert Duvall has one scene as Karl's estranged father. (While *Sling Blade* was being made in Arkansas, Duvall was in a film being shot in Memphis, screenplay cowritten by Thornton, and he came over for a day's work.)

Among the non-pros is Rick Dial, a high-school friend of Thornton, who plays the fix-it boss. Thornton has managed to evoke Dial himself on screen, which is fine. After Karl does his first little miracle of repair, Dial says, "I'll just be damned." That one word "just" verifies the man and the region.

Then there is—Part Three!—Thornton the author. Everything is so rooted, so immediate, that we ask the script to do little more than follow the course of some lives. But beneath the authenticity lurks a drama of fate. Here is a man condemned from birth to make his way through life enveloped in a caul of remoteness despite his plentiful feelings. Thus, deeply implicit in this unassuming film, as in all dramas of fate, is the question of design. If there is design in life, why this one for this man?

A few hours after seeing *Sling Blade* I couldn't remember if it was in color. Then I read in the press material that this was precisely Thornton's intention. He wanted to shoot it in color but with the effect of black-and-white—to use the latest techniques, I assume, but without showbiz. The production designer, Clark Hunter, not only "faded" the clothes, he over-dyed them in darker hues. The film's prop master Dwayne Grady said: "You have no idea how much red there is in the world until you try to avoid it." And Barry Markowitz's camera catches perfectly a visual scheme that hovers between two worlds just as Karl does.

A last word. The press is crammed these days with stories about the strangulation of serious film-making by high costs. Then along come exceptional talent and determination. *Sling Blade* was made for not much more than lunch money on a big production. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

The Journey of Robert Lepage

Robert Lepage, a 39-year-old Québecois theater director, finds a large and admiring audience in Europe whenever he leaves Canada. But except for a few brief appearances in New York sponsored by the Brooklyn Academy of Music, his work, like that of a growing number of the most accomplished people working in theater today (Americans included), is rarely seen in our own country. Once again thanks to Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival and its enterprising leader Harvey Lichtenstein, **The Seven Streams of the River Ota**, a Lepage masterpiece, was made available to New York audiences at the Majestic Theatre for two weeks in December. It confirmed a general belief that this imaginative French-speaking artist is a theater visionary of the very first rank.

The River Ota, a product of Lepage's collaboration with Ex Machina (his permanent company operating out of Québec), was originally created to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing. It is in perpetual rehearsal. Much of it is improvised. Indeed, it grows longer with each performance. (Lepage shares the writing honors with the entire acting company, as well as with the non-performing Gérard Bibeau.) The unusual length of *The River Ota* provokes a sidebar reflection. For some reason, which I have yet to understand, the most powerful theater works of our time have usually been either under two hours in duration (like the deconstructions of the Worcester Group and the terse dramas of David Mamet) or over six (like many of Robert Wilson's productions, one of which takes place over a period of four days). *The River Ota* falls into the second category. Separated by a dinner break, it is an epic play in two parts and seven sections (called *boîtes* or boxes), which require almost eight hours to perform. Winter traveling logistics compelled me to watch the two parts in reverse order and to skip out on the last few scenes of Part I. But with the aid of the complete printed text, I think I can piece together the gist of Lepage's intentions.

The River Ota explores America's responsibility for the horrors inflicted on Hiroshima in 1945. But it is not, as one might think, a device to palpate the guilt glands of Western spectators. Rather, it attempts to show how suffering and sensitivity to suffering are human qualities that somehow manage to unite people. The play probes—and I know this may strike some people as a pious platitude—the illusory nature of the various boundaries that divide the nations of the world. I think Lepage makes a more successful case for one-worldism than Peter Brook, another advocate of intercultural and international harmony. Brook's process (in his work with the International Centre of Theatre Research at the Bouffes du Nord in Paris) is to throw a lot of different nationals together into a single pot and trust the mix will render a uniform and coherent creative stew. Lepage, on the other hand, takes us on a long journey through time and space in order to demonstrate how actions performed in one country by people of another can result, over the decades, in a startling cultural symbiosis. *The River Ota* leans as heavily on the plot of *Madame Butterfly* as do David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* and the Puccini-influenced musical *Miss Saigon*. But instead of treating the story as a paradigm of the seduction of innocent women by insensitive men, or the exploitation of the unblemished East by the impure West, Lepage uses it to expose the artificial nature of all racial, sexual, linguistic and geographical divisions.

The play begins with a brief love

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affair between a U.S. Army photographer named Luke, documenting "physical damage" in bombed-out Hiroshima, and Nozomi, a Japanese *hibakusha*, or atom bomb survivor, who is a living example of this "physical damage," horribly disfigured by the blast. This romance accounts for much that happens in the play. The half-Asian, half-American child of the union, known as Jeffrey Yamashita (Jeffrey 2), goes to New York after his mother's death to make contact with his father Luke and his half-brother, Jeffrey O'Connor (Jeffrey 1). It is only after his father has died, and after he has helped his drug-addicted brother out of a drug-related financial fix by buying the family camera, that Jeffrey 2 reveals his true identity—giving his brother a photograph of their common father. When Jeffrey 1 contracts AIDS, Jeffrey 2 participates in his assisted suicide in an Amsterdam clinic. The depositing of Jeffrey Yamashita's ashes in the bay of Miyajima (Hiroshima) completes the expiatory cycle and ends the play.

Other strands of plot weave subtly through the evening. A traveling troupe of French-Canadian actors come to perform a Feydeau farce (*The Lady from Maxim's*) in Osaka, and, during a one-night stand with a Canadian Embassy official, the troupe's leading lady is discovered by the official's wife in a scene of adultery and exposure that parallels the Feydeau plot. The Czechoslovakian-born Jew Jana Capek (played by Ghislaine Vincent), who appears in the prologue as a student of Japanese martial arts brandishing a samurai sword, has pursued the way of Zen after escaping from Theresienstadt with the aid of a magician. (The Holocaust is depicted as another twentieth-century catastrophe, along with the atom bomb and AIDS, whose survivors, at least in this play, are able to find their way to peace and forgiveness.) "I believe Hiroshima chose me," Jana says in tones of supreme serenity. "Ten years ago, I came to visit a friend and I thought I would find devastation here, but instead I found beauty." Indeed, she found Czechoslovakia, when she discovered that the Atomic Bomb Dome in Hiroshima was built in Prague Secession-style. That kind of surprise is what initially attracted her to the silence of Buddhism, and that kind of surprise—the reversal of normal expectations—becomes almost a structural principle of the play.

Being about the mutual dependence of peoples and cultures, *The River Ota* is inevitably a multilingual project. The text is equally divided between English, French, German and Japanese, with projected captions providing the translated subtitles. The multinational nature of the work is physicalized in the set by Carl Fillion—a long wooden rectangle with a corrugated roof and sliding rice-paper doors, fronted by a narrow walkway and a terrace filled with stones. Like everything and everybody else in Lepage's work, the set transforms. Through the generous use of slide projections and films, Lepage manages to change that neutral structure first into a series of Hiroshima sites (a temple, a dock, a private home) where the action begins, then into a New York tenement, then into a German concentration camp, then into the Japanese stage where the Canadian troupe performs (we see this from a backstage perspective, as in Michael Frayn's *Noises Off*). The set also functions as a Tokyo-Osaka bullet train station, as an airplane runway, even as an American troop ship sailing the Pacific for the West Coast. Perhaps the most stunning use of the scenery is found in the New York episode, where the set is segmented into a triptych: the room of Jeffrey 2 on one side; the room of Jeffrey 1 and his father (watching television with his back to us) on the other; and, in the center, a fully equipped bathroom, into which the eccentric denizens of the tenement gather (simultaneously, as in a Marx Brothers farce) to wash their bodies, brush their teeth and relieve their bowels.

The stagecraft, in short, is magnificent. And so is the acting, alternating between low farce and high solemnity, and performed with the languor and stateliness of Noh plays and Butoh dances. Each scene unfolds to the accompaniment of Gagaku music (composed and performed by Michel F. Côté) with its vibrant reeds, chimes, cymbals and percussive sounds. Clearly, we are meant to be transported into some kind of dream, and the magic effects—a doll held by a soldier that suddenly enlarges into a full-length woman; the doubling of mirrors to reveal a multi-perspective suicide; a marionette show in which the puppets become more real than the puppeteers; a woman who levitates after a ferocious fight with her husband; a torrent of rain falling on the corrugated roof following a peal of thunder and dazzling blue lightning—only reinforce the sense of being carried away by illusion into a deeper reality.

The performance is remarkable—like everything else about the evening, an act of transformation. Nine actors play more than forty characters in a flat, elliptical style unhurried by time or passion. This doubling and trebling of parts is not just a matter of convenience, but a theatrical convention dictated by the circumstances of the play (for example, the same actor or actress will inevitably play both father and son, or both mother and daughter). I suspect it may be some violation of company unity to single out any one actor for praise, but a particular word must be said about Anne-Marie Cadieux, among whose roles are the *hibakusha* Nozomi Yamashita and the angst-ridden actress Sophie Maltais (who herself plays Môme Crevette in the Feydeau farce). She performs the disfigured Nozomi facing upstage in a sitting position, speaking in the softest of voices, her mournful broken English issuing from a figure of absolute stillness, whose immobile back nevertheless speaks with remarkable eloquence. It is Nozomi who dominates the most astonishing moment of the entire evening, when six or seven characters, both male and female, magically mutate one into the other, materializing and disappearing inside Nozomi's wedding kimono. Finally, we see Nozomi herself wearing this kimono—fifty years earlier—as her lover Luke pauses to take her photograph. This is the very essence of what is meant by symbolic action—the compression of a theme inside a series of physical images that have the power to stop time and conquer space.

The importance of the camera in th

Thaumatrope

And sometimes there's this parlor trick;
One side spider, other side the web,
Then thread pulled so the small card spins
And two sides turn to one.
How obvious
And unrehearsed this seems, as darkened glass
Both mirrors and obscures, as pilots think
Blue water must mean bluer sky,
Till climbing up that unknown down
They enter their full-fathomed fall;

As though the world remained the world because
One seeing found the many ways agree—
The first six colors hidden in pastel,
Primary letters rounding into script,
As we have read the double agent's name
That buried in obits or in an ad
Was neither signature nor side.

WYATT PRUNTY

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play suggests Lepage's obsession with image and reality, and, as the commentator Karen Fricker notes in a preface to the text of the play, with mirror images—East and West, male and female, theater and actuality, devastation and rebirth. These are opposites but not oppositions. Indeed, the evening proceeds with a curious absence of conflict. Instead, these opposites are abstract entities that eventually combine together to create what Constantine Treplev (in *The Seagull*) calls the "World Soul." By the end of this long day, we have entered an atmosphere of quietude and contemplation, where the simplest action is charged with meaning. The audience comes to share the ordeals and suffering of the central characters, having participated in a ceremony, part religious, part theatrical, that demonstrates the transfiguring nature of great art. •

Evita, Madonna and Hollywood's idol.

The Blonde Leading the Blind

By Enrique Krauze

I.

Thinkers and politicians through the ages have long been aware that politics is a kind of theater, but after Ronald Reagan's victory in the presidential debates of 1980 the Cuban writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante was moved to consider the parallels between political power and the movies. Exiled from his own country by Fidel Castro, whom he considered a consummate actor, a maestro of monologue, "as effective as Hitler in moving crowds until they became movable masses," Cabrera had personally suffered from the impact of a politician with the skills of an actor. Now the performance of Reagan, "that Errol Flynn of B movies," convinced him that, while being an actor was not a sufficient qualification for being a politician, it certainly helped. Especially if the person involved was a second-rate actor, or better, a failure. On that critical night for his campaign, Reagan spoke with ease, projecting calmness, security, even benevolence. He was the hero who would save what could be saved of the American Century. "It was the best performance of his career," wrote Cabrera Infante, "worth an Oscar, but they only gave him, as consolation prize, the presidency of the United States."

Politicians with the skills of actors have streamed across the stage of the twentieth century. Some of them have been admirable, most of them have been contemptible. There have been fewer actors turned politicians, but they have played equally imperious and disturbing roles. Chung Chien, a minor and unsuccessful actress in low-budget films, made use of her thespian experience to perform with success a whole series of historical roles: fervent follower of the leader of Hunan, protagonist of the Long March, omnipotent wife of the omnipotent Mao Tse-tung. At the same time, at the other end of the world, another famous dictator, General Juan Domingo Perón, declared that "the Argentine who can perform on the speaker's platform the way Gardel does on the screen will hold Argentina in the palm of his hand." Carlos Gardel was the legendary actor and singer of tangos who had died in a plane crash in 1935. The Argentinian stage was empty, and ready. But it was not Perón who would take Argentina in the palm of his hand. It was his consort, an unsuccessful actress in low-budget films named Eva Duarte.

Evita
a film by Alan Parker
(Hollywood Pictures)

Santa Evita
by Tomás Eloy Martínez
translated by Helen Lane
(Knopf, 369 pp., $23)

Eva Perón: A Biography
by Alicia Dujovne Ortiz
translated by Shawn Fields
(St. Martin's, 325 pp., $24.95)

It all began where it has now returned, in Hollywood. In Junín, a small provincial city, an Argentine girl read the magazine *Sintonía* and clipped photographs of Norma Shearer. The girl had seen Shearer play Marie Antoinette. She would dream of being the American film star, playing the same queenly role and listening from her prison cell to the drum rolls at the guillotine. The girl had no resources, no education, no particular physical gifts other than very smooth skin, translucent, like alabaster. She industriously practiced a kind of schoolgirl recitation of poetry, but her pronunciation was excruciatingly poor. Yet nothing would hold her back. She had decided that her hometown was too small for her, that she would become an actress.

On New Year's Day in 1935, when she was 15 years old, she left Junín for Buenos Aires, the Argentinian capital. For almost ten years she would work at her chosen vocation with very little luck: non-speaking parts in plays, minor roles in movies, photographs for entertainment magazines or advertising posters. Every step was due to the patronage of one or another impresario, with the exchange of sex for work a given, though some were nicer about it than others. A woman who worked with her during that period recalls that:

> Evita was a little transparent thing, she was very skinny, very fine, with black hair and an elongated face.... She was so thin, you would have thought she was a draft.... Her hands were always cold and clammy due to her hunger.... Indeed she was cold even in her acting work: a real ice cube. She was not a girl who could show emotion. She was very subdued and very shy.

"In the theater, I was awful," Eva would confess many years later. "In the movies, I managed; but if I was good at something, it was radio." She was right. The genre of the radio play regularly provoked fevers of emotion throughout Latin America. Every evening, from Mexico to Patagonia, women of all social classes would pass their time listening to the umpteenth version of *Cinderella.* (The same is now true of soap operas.) The fragile Eva began to be recognized as a heroine of these radio plays, where the only thing that counted was the melodramatic tone communicated by her voice: high-pitched, quivering, honest, suffering.

Still, the first six months of 1943 were a nightmare for her. She was without work and attention, an unemployed and faded Cinderella. And then the military coup of June, 1943—the first in Argentina since 1930, and the preamble to a long military hegemony—rescued her from her despair. Through the patronage of a certain Colonel Aníbal Imbert, she signed a contract with Radio Belgrano to star in a series of programs about cele-

ENRIQUE KRAUZE's *Mexico: A Biography of Power* will be published by HarperCollins this spring.

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brated women, all of whom were to be either artists, such as Sarah Bernhardt and Isadora Duncan, or, preferably, empresses: Elizabeth I of England, Eugenie de Montijo (the wife of Napoleon III), Carlota of Mexico, Anne of Austria, Catherine of Russia. The weekly magazine *Antena* now described her as "the famous actress Eva Duarte."

Her meeting with Juan Domingo Perón, on January 22, 1944, instantly changed her own life and that of her country. "Thank you for existing," she said to him, sounding uncannily like a radio play turned reality. Once established as the lover of the powerful General Perón, who was then Minister of Labor, Eva continued to do radio and to move up in the movie business. Her last role on the big screen was as the star of the film *La pródiga*, or *The Prodigal Woman*, a typical Spanish drama of religious conversion: a female sinner atones for a licentious life through works of charity, and the poor make her into a saint, calling her "the Lady," "the mother of the poor," "the sister to the afflicted." When she rose to power, Eva had all the prints of the film destroyed. The movie revealed too much. For *The Prodigal Woman*, together with those radio actresses and empresses, had furnished her with the script for her future. In the case of Eva Duarte, a movie was not inspired by reality; reality was inspired by a movie.

With her role now clear to her, a physical transformation was necessary. "Do my hair like that, Julito, like Bette Davis's," she had told her hairdresser years before. Later he began to do her hair like Olivia de Havilland in *Gone with the Wind*, but Eva's new part called for something more than just a change of style. It was then that she decided to lose her past as a *morocha*, the Argentine term for a dark-haired, lower-class woman, and to dye her hair. She was to be reborn as a blond Madonna. "It was a theatrical and symbolic gold," writes Alicia Dujovne Ortiz, in her biography of Eva Perón, "a gold that imitated the effect of the golden halos and backgrounds of the religious paintings of the Middle Ages. This art isolated holy bodies, distanced them from the earth, from heaviness and from density."

Evita herself would say that "the poor like to see me lovely, they don't want to be championed by some lady who doesn't dress well. They dream of me and I cannot disappoint them." So as not to disappoint the poor, she sought counsel on elegant clothes from women of high society, and in Europe bought Dior dresses and Rochas perfumes. Jewels drove her wild—or, more precisely, they nourished and calmed her—but she did not disdain hard cash. When she died, she owned 1,200 gold and silver brooches, three ingots of platinum, 756 pieces of silver and gold work, 144 ivory brooches, a 48-karat emerald, 1,653 diamonds, 120 wristwatches and 100 clocks made of gold, other unnumbered precious gems and necklaces and brooches of platinum as well as stocks and property, all of it worth tens of millions of dollars.

You can leaf through any copy of *People* or *Paris Match* without coming upon a fate that can be remotely compared to Eva Duarte's. She was Cinderella and also the fairy godmother, the former sinner to whom Providence had done justice by filling her to overflowing with fame, power and many millions. But she was not just any rich woman. She was a new "prodigal woman," "the Lady of Hope," "the foremost Argentine samaritan." It took her only a few months to place her country in the palm of her hand.

And yet she felt that her country was too small for her, and in 1947 she tried to add Europe to her conquests. The reporters called her triumphal journey of that year *la travesia del Arco Iris*, or the Rainbow Tour. Glittering at the head of her royal procession, she conquered Spain but enjoyed less success in Italy and some other countries. In Paris, however, Cardinal Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII, would exclaim, when he saw her about to enter Notre Dame: "The Empress Eugenie has returned!"

When she felt that she had won the heart of Europe, her ambition increased considerably. "What I want," she announced, "is to pass into History." Her sudden illness would promote that dream into a desire for immortality. To achieve it, she ordered that her body be embalmed. There is a darker version of this detail, which Madonna notes in the excerpts from a diary that recently appeared in *Vanity Fair*: it is that Perón himself decided on the embalming and ordered that Evita be injected months before her death with "chemical preparations" that would retard the visual deterioration of her body and also (according to this story) forbid the use of painkillers, which could have interfered with the cosmetic chemicals.

Evita died of cancer of the uterus at the age of 33. Half a million people attended the monumental funeral, showering her with 1,500,000 flowers. But afterwards the body would find no rest. As if animated by a life of its own, and casting a spell over anyone who took charge of it, the angelic object would endure an incredible nomadic journey of almost twenty years across Argentina and Europe. It was hidden, buried and dug up various times; once it was muti-

EVITA BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

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lated; and it wound up accompanying Perón into exile. This necrophilic process of wandering, this afterlife, is the central theme of *Santa Evita*, the dark and fascinating novel by Tomás Eloy Martínez. ("I don't want readers to seek Madonna in my book," Martínez recently told *The New York Times*. Pity a good novel struggling against a bad movie.) And in the end, after the no less incredible return of Perón to Argentina in 1973, pressure grew to repatriate Evita's remains. After the *caudillo*'s death, his widow Isabelita—who, it is said, tried to absorb the soul of the dead Evita—brought the body to Argentina and gave it a Christian burial in the Cemetery of la Recoleta, where Eva Perón now rests.

But is she at rest? The history of her embalmed body belongs to the literature of the macabre, but the obsession with the living Evita, which seems never to abate, is a persistent phenomenon of cultural and political significance. Long before her death, Eva had attracted a level of devotion in the Hispanic world comparable to the adoration accorded to the various names of the Virgin Mary. It was an idolatry that reached extremes of hysteria. People sent her letters so that they might "have a place in your thoughts." "It is like being in the mind of God," wrote a victim of polio. Many Argentines decided that the best way to demonstrate love for their saint was to establish new records: for unremitting work, for fasting, for dancing the tango, for linked sequences of shots on a pool table.

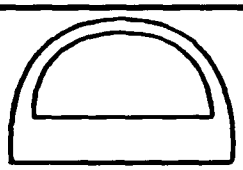
Martínez offers a lively recreation of religious scenes that are almost impossible to believe. To ask God that He heal Evita's illness, a harness-maker, accompanied by his wife and three children, one of them a babe in arms, made a 1,000-kilometer pilgrimage on foot to a statue of Cristo Redentor in the Andes. Questioned about his intentions, he answered: "If Evita dies, thousands will be abandoned. You can find people like us anywhere, but there's only one saint like Evita." For many months after her death, the radio stations of Argentina interrupted their broadcasts every evening at 8:25 p.m., so as to inform their listeners that it was exactly at that moment that "Eva had entered immortality." The Vatican received 40,000 letters asking that she be canonized. (The Holy See refused to consider it.) The fetishism that accrued to objects that Evita had touched reached the extreme of treating as "sacred" the banknotes that she had distributed.

It was a collective fervor not easy to explain. Jorge Luis Borges once told me that "no one is Catholic in Argentina but everyone has to pretend to be.... Catholicism has been replaced by Argentine history." Perhaps Evita came to fill the void in Argentine piety. Eventually, of course, the religious devotion to Evita would diminish in intensity; but the religious was quickly succeeded by the mythological. Innumerable articles, newspaper stories, memoirs, novels and other works would be written about her. Documentaries and fiction films would be produced. She would be hugely venerated and hugely despised: the Great Saint, the Great Whore. Her halo would remain luminous, until Broadway picked it up. It was Andrew Lloyd Webber who fulfilled Eva Duarte's childhood dream. It all returned to where it had begun, to Hollywood.

II.

"She would die a second time, were she to see herself caricatured by that vulgar woman Madonna," says Maria Felix, the famous Mexican actress who was close to Evita in her last years. But maybe not. Eva Perón would certainly be pleased by the spirit of deification in *Evita*, by the deranginglly sumptuous production values, by the crude lyrics of Tim Rice and the saccharine music of Andrew Lloyd Webber,

MILAH PRESS congratulates Professor Daniel Jonah Goldhagen on his vigorous response to the critics of ***HITLER AND HIS WILLING EXECUTIONERS.*** This book should be on the shelf of all readers of history!



There are striking similarities between Goldhagen's central thesis and the view of the germans described by two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, Ben Hecht. Hecht published his ***GUIDE FOR THE BEDEVILLED*** in 1944. It was reprinted by MILAH PRESS in 1996. Compare the following paragraphs:

"The Germans sat at desks and held conferences, discussing the most economical way to murder Jews. The Germans at those desks were not fantastic Germans. They were usual Germans...At these desks were all the German students and leaders and public citizens whom we will see again when, as tourists, we visit the streets of conquered Berlin." (Hecht, *Guide for the Bedevilled.* p. 142 1944)

"The first task in restoring the perpetrators to the center of our understanding of the Holocaust is to restore to them their identities, grammatically by using not the passive but the active voice in order to ensure that they, the actors, are not absent from their own deeds (as in, "five hundred Jews were killed in city X on date Y"), and by eschewing convenient, yet often inappropriate and obfuscating labels, like "Nazis" and "SS men," and calling them what they were, "Germans." The most appropriate, indeed the only appropriate *general* proper name for the Germans who perpetrated the Holocaust is "Germans." (Goldhagen, *Hitler and His Willing Executioners*, pp. 5-6. 1996).

Another excellent companion work is the groundbreaking research of David Morrison into the papers of Jewish leaders at the time of the Holocaust. Only this book gives the reader a complete understanding of what was done and what was not done to rescue Jews. Morrison's ***HEROES, ANTIHEROES AND THE HOLOCAUST*** drew this response from Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel: ***"Read this book. It deals with American Jewish attitudes during the dark period of Night. I found it informative, disturbing, stimulating. And necessary."***

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by the demagoguery and the high-budget populism of the screenplay co-authored by Oliver Stone, even by the performance of Madonna, vigorous but never charismatic. Perónism in power ferociously persecuted socialists and Communists, but Evita would not have been entirely displeased to share the stage with a martyr of the forsaken, such as Che Guevara, teasingly called only "Che" here, gratuitously added to the mix but gracefully acted by Antonio Banderas. As for the people of Argentina, Alan Parker has directed them as a mass of mannequins with greased hair who can do only one of three things: march in files, shout slogans and dance the tango. The crowd scenes are mechanical and interchangeable. Soldiers, oligarchs, workers, women, nurses, all these mobs of extras line up in obedient and symmetrical formations, as the autocracy of politics melts into the autocracy of movie-making.

As a depiction of Juan and Evita, Perónism and Argentina, *Evita* is trivial or worse. Argentina figures as little more than just another banana republic, and Eva as an ambitious whore who more or less calmly sleeps her way to the top. (Madonna, in *Vanity Fair*, loftily takes exception to this part of the script.) The film is operatic, schematic, devoid of dramatic tension, cold as ice. Finally *Evita* tells us nothing of importance about the reasons that this woman became what she became.

The complicated roots of Eva Perón's ambition are examined more responsibly by Alicia Dujovne Ortiz in her biography and by Tomás Eloy Martínez in his novel. They give similar answers to the great riddle of Evita's life: her oceanic ambition. They begin with the fact that she was an illegitimate child who was (culturally, this was even worse) the product of an adulterous relationship. Juan Duarte, Evita's father, was a man of the Argentine middle class who managed haciendas. When Evita was growing up, her father was supporting his legitimate family in the town of Chivilcoy. Years before, he had abandoned Eva's mother, Juana Ibarguren, leaving her with five children, his son Juan and his four daughters. Doña Juana was an illegitimate child herself, and in bringing up her offspring she suffered real hardship. She lived with all her children in a single room of the inn that she managed, and had to take in other people's sewing.

The elusive Juan Duarte did not even attend the baptism of his youngest illegitimate daughter Evita. Juana remembered that "he saw Evita so rarely that if he had run across her in the middle of the fields, he would not have recognized her." Eva came to know her father only in his coffin on the day of his burial, when Duarte's legitimate family brutally rejected the Ibargurens, a scene well presented in the film. As for Eva, she retained her rancor through the years. Before formally marrying Perón, she returned to the town of Los Toldos, her actual birthplace, where she removed the original record of her birth (as Eva Ibarguren) and had a new certificate deposited in Junín under the name of Duarte, which her father had denied her. In her time in power, she was obsessed with finding fiancés for women who had been prostitutes and marrying off couples living out of wedlock with their children. In 1951, she was the godmother at 804 weddings.

Her resentment was also owed to her sexual history. Jokes and insults were heaped upon her and her memory, on the assumption that she had been a prostitute. Borges, who hated Evita, told me one of those jokes: a proposal is made to change the name of the city of La Plata to Evita Perón, but Perón himself has doubts about it. A member of Congress comes up with the ideal solution: call the city La Pluta, a fusion of *plata*, or silver, and *puta*, or whore. What is certain is that the role of seductress hardly suited her. "Those who knew her," Martínez says, "considered her the least sexual woman in the world." The male lead in one of her movies said about Eva Duarte that "you couldn't get yourself excited about her even if the two of you were alone on a desert island." Dujovne presents Evita's love affairs—with the exception of Emilio Kartulowicz, the editor of *Sintonía*, her favorite magazine, and of course Perón himself—as transient, unhappy, often humiliating. Nothing like the lighthearted spirit of "Goodnight and thank you, whoever," Andrew Lloyd Webber's cloying song.

In *Santa Evita*, Martínez reconstructs, from the statements of two friends, a picture of her in those first six months of 1943: "frail and sickly ... she had little tits and had a complex about the size of them.... She looked ... like one of those alley cats that will survive cold, hunger, the cruelty of human beings." Martínez was able to establish that, between February and May 1943, she spent time in the Otamendi y Miroli clinic in Buenos Aires under the name of Maria Eva Ibarguren:

> She [was] pregnant.... Neither she nor the father wanted to have the kid.... The problem was that the abortion ended in disaster. Butchery. The bottom of her uterus got perforated. The ligaments, the tubes were badly torn. In half an hour, drenched with blood, she collapsed with peritonitis.... In those days she would rather have been dead.

The experience was only one in a long saga of insults and injuries that Eva always remembered, with the hope of eventual revenge. "If Eva managed to become somebody," one informant told Martínez, "it's because of her intention never to forgive."

Her liaison with Perón redeemed her. He would raise her to a position from which she could reverse her fate and avenge all the affronts. But Perón needed her as much as she needed him. From his recent experience as a military observer in Mussolini's Italy—he would have raised a monument to Mussolini "on every street corner," he said—Perón came away with the prescription for seizing hold of Argentina: "To manipulate people is a technique ... an art that requires military precision. I learned this in Italy in 1940. Those people knew how to command!" He was an assiduous reader of *Mein Kampf* and had visited Berlin during the war. Taking Goebbels as a guide, he would emphasize the importance of oratory, especially in the medium of radio, for the political manipulation of the masses.

That was where Evita and her age harmonically converged. Like other Latin American capitals, Buenos Aires was filled with a new body of urban workers, uneducated people who had swarmed, with Evita herself, from the country to the city near the beginning of the Second World War. They were *los descamisados*, "the shirtless ones," uprooted masses hungry for a savior. They were Evita's people, and she was Perón's perfect partner in the enterprise of power, the orator who could mesmerize the shirtless ones, the co-*caudilla* of the *justicialista* movement.

"I created Eva," Perón would assert years later, from his comfortable exile in Madrid. In a sense, he was right. The old wolf, remember, was twenty-five years older than his consort. A distinguished athlete, an idiosyncratic author of texts on military history and the place-names of the Mapuche Indians of Chile, more a politician than a soldier, Perón was certainly a more complicated man than the man portrayed in Dujovne's biography. But did they love each other? Of course they did. In some way. Or so we can gather from their letters to each other, though people at that level of power are always writing about their feelings with posterity in mind. (In this connection, the greatest weakness of Dujovne's book is her reliance on Freudian psychology, a

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lot of which has been edited out of the English version. For example: "Perón needed Eva to hide his identification with his mother. She was assigned to certify his virility." There is also too much pseudopoetry, Eva "a sparrow fluttering around a bull," Perón a "protective mass, large and solid," and so on.)

Eva's stardom began on October 17, 1945, when Perón was acclaimed by a crowd of hundreds of thousands in the Plaza de Mayo. As the wife of the President of the Republic, she moved with him to the Palacio Unzué, a modest residence of 283 rooms, barely enough to accommodate Eva's wardrobe. From these heights, she could remake her history from its roots. And she could accumulate the fortune that she deserved. Nothing could ever be enough. Displaying her wealth and her power was Eva's way of emulating and defying the society that had treated her with disdain. And, according to Dujovne, Eva bore an additional burden. She grew up with a calcium deficiency and was for the rest of her life painfully aware of her physical vulnerability.

As a young girl, she once saw her own image in a mutilated doll that her mother gave her for Christmas. It is hardly surprising that, having reversed her own destiny, she set out to do the same for all the poor of her country. For Christmas in 1947, she gave away 5 million toys. Year after year she distributed tens of thousands of shoes, pants, dresses, jars, dolls, tricycles, soccer balls, baby bottles, food products, dentures, sewing machines. "You have the right to ask!" she would shout to the ecstatic beneficiaries of her charity, as the free bread mounted high, along with a flood of social work as hallucinatory as it was tangible and often effective: small cities for students, cities for children (ur-Disneylands), clinics, residences for the aged, hospital trains moving through the country. Who paid for all this largesse? Not Eva, certainly. Her sainthood in the eyes of her countrymen was purchased for her by the treasury of Argentina and by the workers themselves, with their "voluntary" donations, and, of course, by the future generations whom she and her husband impoverished with debt and inflation.

In the annals of populism, Eva Perón broke all records. She received twenty delegations a day. She frenetically visited factories, schools, hospitals, union centers, sporting clubs, neighborhoods and small towns. With equal devotion, she inaugurated bridges, roads, schools, soccer tournaments. When she had nothing else to give away, she distributed banknotes or advice. And she was also in some real sense a feminist who gave the women of Argentina the right to vote and be elected to office.

Everything she did, she did personally. She would question people about their lives: "How many children do you have? Do they sleep in beds?" Her confessor, the Jesuit Father Benitez, wrote: "I saw her kiss lepers, people with tuberculosis, cancer.... I saw her take people in rags in her arms and catch their lice." There was always an element of theater in those exhibitions of charity, but there is no doubt that she was moved by a genuine compassion for human suffering. By a kind of mission.

III.

Evita largely ignores the many cruelties of Perónism. It might be objected that such harsh realities have no place in a musical; but an infinitely better musical, Bob Fosse's *Cabaret*, owed much of its force to its honest presentation of the Nazis, who provided the sinister background to the story in the show and the film. Juan and Eva Perón had their opponents jailed, often tortured, sometimes killed. According to Dujovne, there occurred at least one incident, involving the electric torture of female employees of the telephone company who refused to join the Perónist Party, in which Evita herself was rumored to have given the order for the prods to be applied. Of course, the Peróns' use of torture and murder cannot be compared, in extent and in horror, to the orgy of sadism unleashed by the military government and its paramilitary allies during the Argentine "Dirty War" of the late 1970s and early 1980s; but that extenuates nothing.

Indeed, toward the end of Perón's first period in power, the torturers at his command acquired the more sophisticated techniques of their trade from some of its greatest experts: the Nazi war criminals who flooded to sanctuary in Argentina. The admiration of the Argentine army for their German counterparts, proverbial during the final decades of the nineteenth century, had grown even stronger with the crisis of 1929—a humiliating time for Argentina, with its export economy dependent on England—and it would become even more solid with the rise of Hitler. Perón was a member of the military group that in 1943 left no doubt about their sympathies, in a secretly composed manifesto: "Today Germany is giving life a historic direction. We must follow this example.... Hitler's fight, in times of peace and in times of war, will have to guide us from now on." The Argentine government placed its bets on the Axis, literally until the last minute. Argentina declared war, on the side of the Allies, on March 27, 1945, and the reason—according to the cynical account of Perón himself—was to provide a way to save Nazi lives. In this, Perón was successful. According to Dujovne, 90,000 Nazis were living securely in Juan and Evita's Argentina by 1947.

Not long after meeting Perón, Evita moved into a sumptuous mansion, the considerate gift of one of Perón's friends, the German millionaire (and Nazi agent) Rudolf Ludwig Freude. Along with three of his countrymen, Heinrich Dörge, Ricardo von Leute and Ricardo Staudt, Freude would figure in a still obscure episode. (Dujovne notes that the facts have never been fully established, but the evidence that she offers, based on dozens of sources, is overwhelming.) The issue was nothing less than the delivery of the treasure of the Nazis to Argentina for safekeeping. The move took place around the time of the collapse of Nazi Germany in 1945.

Two German submarines deposited their cargo on the docks of La Plata. There are at least two precise inventories of that cargo. The lists coincide: tens of millions of dollars in various currencies, 2,511 kilograms of gold, 4,638 karats of diamonds, a river of jewels, and works of art and precious objects stolen from the Jews of Europe and formerly deposited in the Reichsbank of Berlin. Vice-Führer Martin Bormann is supposed to have entrusted the operation to Otto Skorzeny, chief of Hitler's commando forces. According to Dujovne, the operation may have been supported by members of the Vatican hierarchy. It is certain that Croatian priests were central figures in the operation of what Allied intelligence called "the rat line," which funneled Nazis and Nazi "property" to sympathetic Latin American countries and, most especially, Argentina.

Bormann himself, it is said, was scheduled to arrive in Argentina and take charge of the treasure. According to various sources, the real overseers were none other than Juan and Eva Perón. Certainly Perón was a key mover in the operation. He is also supposed to have provided the military attaché at the German Embassy with 8,000 Argentine passports and 1,100 identity cards. Perón never hid his sympathy for the Nazis; he referred to the refugees of the Luftwaffe as "Justicialistas of the air." In recompense for his services, the Nazis opened an account for him in Switzerland and gave him a mansion in Cairo, where, in 1960, he would live for a time.

Perhaps Evita was playing only a non-

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speaking part: serving coffee, accepting gifts. But later, during her "Rainbow Tour" across Europe, odd events began to happen. In Rapallo, she met with an important figure in the Vatican hierarchy. Almost at the same time, a shipment of Argentine wheat docked at Genoa. Was she discussing only wheat? And her itinerary seemed to lack rhyme or reason: Lisbon to Paris to the Costa Azul to Switzerland to Lisbon to Dakar. She spent five days in Switzerland, and in Lisbon she had a long meeting with the deposed King Umberto of Italy. Various clues collected by Dujovne, derived from monographs on the subject, as well as testimony from Skorzeny himself, suggest that Eva, with the aid of someone in the Vatican hierarchy and the mediation of King Umberto, deposited in Switzerland at least some part of the treasure of the Nazis.

The death of her brother, Juan, less than a year after she died, under circumstances that have never been clarified, may support the hypothesis that he was the guardian of the secret bank deposit. The four Germans supposedly involved in the plans for receiving the treasure—Dörge, Von Leute, Staudt and the millionaire Freude himself—all died between 1948 and 1952, and they may have been executed by order of the Nazi hierarchy "in exile," thereby claiming full use of the treasure for their own purposes. Perón is also supposed to have returned part of the treasure to Skorzeny.

But there is no mystery at all about the direct aid given by Evita to the mass murderers of Croatia, one of Hitler's most savage satellites. In 1954, *Izbor*, the magazine of the Argentine Croatian community, wrote: "We roamed all over Europe, visiting many countries, until the day our pain knocked on the door of the most noble heart that was beating in the whole world at that time, that of Eva Perón, when she was visiting Rome." Among the war criminals who, thanks to Evita Perón, obtained visas or passports through the International Red Cross, was Ante Pavelic, the Croatian führer himself, who had presided over the murders of many hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies in the concentration camps of Croatia. He reached Buenos Aires under a false name and in the robes of a priest, together with his compatriots Vjekoslav Vrancic, who was decorated by Hitler for his planning of mass deportation, and Branko Benzón, who became Juan Perón's personal physician. With them came a band of Ustashe refugees, some of whom, according to Dujovne, contributed their talents for torture to the Perónista police.

Can Evita be forgiven? Can we believe that she knew nothing? Consider this. In 1955, the Revolucion Libertadora overthrew Perón and displayed some of Juan and Eva's personal possessions to the public. Among the objects was a sumptuous storage box. It was adorned with inlay and contained a set of silver plates. And on the lid of the box was a Star of David in mother-of-pearl. Obviously a piece of Nazi plunder, its significance could not have passed unnoticed even by the most pristine of fairy godmothers.

IV.

The critics of Eva Perón used to say that she did good very badly and evil very well. They were unfair in the first half of their indictment. Eva began life as one of the disinherited, and she was able genuinely to communicate with a significant number of them. And, fleetingly at least, she helped them. But the second part of the indictment is just. The political conduct of Perónism is a stunning example of everything that the nations of Latin America are struggling to overcome.

Perónism was a veritable manual of anti-democratic practices. The liberal opposition (*el Partido Radical*), the socialists and the Communists, the leaders of labor, the factions of the opposition: all were systematically persecuted. (The scenes in *Evita* that show or suggest such repression are extremely confused. If Eva was so worthy of idolatry, what could all this protest have been about?) The official nationalist newspapers, among them the Nazi *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*, could count on generous tax exemptions, but the free press almost disappeared in Perón's Argentina, as the government rationed their supply of newsprint or forced the sale of these papers to government loyalists or directly expropriated them or shut them down. The National University was steadily stripped of its autonomy. "The martial figure of Perón and the angelic figure of his spouse, wrapped in delicately pinkish clouds," recalls the historian Tulio Halperin Donghi, "began to decorate the readers for primary schools." A disciple of Goebbels named Apold was given the job of creating the apparatus of Perónista propaganda. His office produced the slogan: *Perón cumple, Eva dignifica*; Perón accomplishes, Eva dignifies.

In the best Fascist style, a committee was created to investigate "anti-Argentine activities," a synonym, of course, for anti-Perónista actions of any kind. The committee censored books and jailed writers. They imprisoned Victoria Ocampo, editor of the internationally acclaimed magazine *Sur*, which for decades had published the finest writing in the Hispanic world. Borges's mother was sent to jail, and Borges was fired from his job in the National Library and given the position of chicken inspector for the markets of Buenos Aires. Radio stations could not broadcast even the slightest criticism of the government. Radio Belgrano, for which Eva had portrayed famous women, became her personal property. Any musician or dancer or singer who failed to demonstrate his or her attachment to the regime suffered for it, while court poets flourished.

Meticulously re-enacting the old Spanish tradition of patrimonial power, Juan and Evita Perón behaved like the only legitimate lords and masters of Argentina. The entire Duarte family would prosper in the shadow of Evita. Her brother became Perón's corrupt and influential secretary, one of her brothers-in-law was a senator, another was director of Customs, another was a prominent judge. Congress functioned as a mere adjunct to the Peróns, who eliminated the protections of congressional immunity. When Evita visited the Supreme Court, the chief justice asked her politely to sit down in the public area, next to his own wife, rather than on the bench by his side, and Evita had him dismissed from the court. She would later fire many judges throughout the legal system. Toward the end of her career, she proposed herself for the vice-presidency of the Republic. (Perón, under pressure from the military, this time refused to grant her wish.) Had she lived, she might even have considered overthrowing him. After all, she had already played Catherine the Great.

A sinister assortment of "isms" will always be connected with the memory of Perónism: populism, caudillism, chauvinism, militarism. They are the four horsemen of the Latin American apocalypse, the wounds that have blocked the continent's access to the modern world, the true origin of the depression and the despair that afflicts this weak point of the Western world.

Populism ruined the economy of Argentina. (At the beginning of the century, Argentina had been one of the wealthiest countries on earth.) It sowed social resentment and a cynical mentality of entitlement among the Argentine masses. It was a huge collective deception: human beings as permanent children, the powerful as Santa Claus, life as an endless Christmas. And it was this populism that led in part to the Marxist revolutionary movements of Argentina in the 1960s and 1970s. The myth of

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Evita moved easily across the ideological spectrum; the icon of right-wing populism became the icon of many Marxist revolutionaries, especially the Montonero "Perónists of the Left." "If Eva were alive, she would be a Montonera," these urban guerrillas liked to say in the 1970s. Were they right? History has provided only an ambiguous and horrifying answer. During the most recent Argentine military dictatorship, many of these "left-Perónist" guerrillas (as well as thousands of men, women and children who had never lifted a finger in violence) would die, often by being thrown, still barely alive, from airplanes into the Atlantic Ocean, after weeks and months of unspeakable torture at the hands of, among others, "Perónists of the Right."

Caudillism, the oldest of the continent's social ills, means the concentration of power into the hands of a single man—and, in this exceptional case, in the hands of a single woman who ruled with her husband, a *caudilla*, an angry and rapacious actress richly endowed with charisma. When the *caudillo* rules, the personal passions of the leader are transferred to the history of the nation, converting history into a kind of biography of power. Almost all our countries have experienced this phenomenon—most notably Mexico, beginning in the nineteenth century and lasting to this day—but in Perónist Argentina it took on a special coloration due to the complete lack of institutional limits, except for the eventual veto of the army. Eva could and did convert Argentina into a stage for the movie of her life.

Chauvinism is an overvaluation, careless and erroneous, of the situation and the destiny of one's own country among the nations of the world. It is always a doctrine of hatred. Argentina, blessed with a vast and wealthy territory and a relatively literate and homogeneous population, might have concentrated its energies into a process of balanced development: without exhausting its agriculture, without staking too much on its industry, without great bursts of nationalization and, above all, without wasting its accumulated wealth. Instead Argentina lost its way, lost almost an entire century, as it allowed itself a false dream of total self-sufficiency and an unhealthy obsession with the Anglo-Saxon world. Perónism peddled this kind of ideological hashish, which infects nations with an arrogance from which sooner or later they awaken disoriented, insecure, sometimes suicidal.

Militarism has been, until very recently, a plague across the entire Latin American continent. Whole generations have been lost, trampled beneath the boots of the military. And what have these "gorillas" left behind them? Order, much order, but also misery, inequality and a culture of death. There were military regimes that preceded Perónism in the history of Argentina, but Perónism had the distinction of weakening and adulterating all political institutions and civil liberties. Much of the Argentine military with its old-family connections hated the parvenu Evita, but it is no exaggeration to say that Perónism laid the foundations for the military government's "Dirty War" in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which would leave a trail of at least 30,000 dead and *desaparecidos*.

Eva Perón represented a little of the best in the Spanish Christian heritage of Latin America, an echo of the old sense of distributive justice, a footnote to the universal history of charity. But that is hardly the whole truth. Populist, *caudillista*, chauvinist, militarist (and not entirely by chance, pro-Nazi): Eva Perón was certainly the greatest female demagogue of the twentieth century. And now this heroine twice-born in Hollywood moves across the world on a new "Rainbow Tour." Evita accomplishes; Madonna dignifies. It must not be forgotten, therefore, that this woman and her husband also represented the worst of this tradition, the worst of our century. The universal history of charity? No, Evita belongs securely to what Borges, in the title of one of his books, called "The Universal History of Infamy."

—translated by Hank Heifetz

Alien Nation

BY NOAH ISENBERG

The Politics of Memory: Looking for Germany in the New Germany by Jane Kramer

(Random House, 293 pp., $27.50)

Ever since the first cries of unification were heard in the streets of Leipzig in the autumn of 1989, when the slogan *Wir sind das Volk*! (we are the people!) became *Wir sind ein Volk*! (we are one people!), the world has kept a watchful eye on Europe's new, reinvented superpower. Günter Grass, one of the most outspoken critics of unification, had noted as long ago as 1970 that "when we speak ... of two German states of the German nation, we have to recognize not only the territorial and political division, but also the incompatibility of two existing German social realities." In today's Germany, such expressions of concern and skepticism linger, and some of them have become all the more amplified in the wake of the growing pains—and the grossly underestimated costs—of unification. Resentments have taken hold. The slogans of 1989 notwithstanding, Germans do not speak as a united people.

Seven years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, there is a politically unified German state, but the former divisions, in particular the incompatible "social realities" of which Grass spoke, still prevail. For the most part, former East Germans consider themselves just that, while the residents of the West have remained citizens of the Federal Republic, old and new. Helmut Kohl's speedy annexation of East Germany has caused some Easterners to feel as if they were living in Kohl's colony, in what they call the *Kohlonie*. Germans frequently speak of the *Mauer im Kopf*, the wall in the mind, and of the *Kolonie im eigenen Land*, the colony in your own country.

In the spirit of Germany's first political unification under Bismarck, 125 years ago, today's Germany continues to ask itself the infamous question: "What is German?" The enigmatic character of this question, loaded as it is with a legacy of war and destruction, profound regional differences and nearly half a century of division, has only increased in recent years. And when it is asked from beyond Germany's borders, the German Question becomes no less enigmatic. Enter Jane Kramer, the European correspondent for *The New Yorker*.

In her "Letters from Europe," written between 1988 and 1995, Kramer has been attentively "looking for Germany in the New Germany," as she puts it in the subtitle to her new book. The six essays in the book range widely: from the story of a Kreuzberg restaurant opened by a veteran '68er leftist and destroyed by anarchist radicals, to the tremendous ills of post-Wall Berlin; from an exposé of

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the former GDR's State Secret Police to stories on an incapacitated and disillusioned East German runaway, a Ludwigshafen police officer and his interactions with West German skinheads; and, finally, the title piece, "The Politics of Memory," on the controversy surrounding the construction of a Holocaust memorial in Berlin.

Kramer has many interesting things to say about how Germans see themselves and their nation, and how they are to be seen. Her discussion of Berlin sheds light on the volatile new capital as a work-in-progress, a construction site for refashioning the New Germany, a site for national debate. "All Berlin is symbols," notes Kramer, and the centrally located Potsdamer Platz—a site formerly "up against the wall"—is one of particular import.

> Right now, the Potsdamer Platz looks like a large back yard that no one has bothered to tend for fifty years. The Allies bombed it continuously from 1943 to 1945, and the rubble is overgrown with weeds and scrub and crabgrass, and the grass has got so long it bends in the wind, like beach grass. But it was once a hub, and the people who used to avoid it have started using it again, if they are on foot and in a hurry, because it makes such a good diagonal shortcut from the Tiergarten to East Berlin, and maybe because, being so bleak still, it makes an interesting kind of transition between the two Berlins—a liminal space where the soul of the city seems indeed suspended.

Kramer's prose is vibrant and stylish. She has a knack for capturing issues in anecdotes and carefully reconstructed narratives that she gleans from her informants and the German press. In her stories, we encounter a cast of motley players from the post-*Wende* world. (The *Wende*, or "turn," is what the Germans call the recent revolution in their history.) There is Peter Schmidt, the wandering young East German who manages to make his way to Hamburg only to discover that life in the West is more complicated than the Elton John lyrics he overheard when, one spring day in 1981, he picked up a Swedish hitchhiker who irreversibly changed his *Weltanschauung*. In her fascinating report on skinheads, Kramer introduces the tough but warm-hearted Ludwigshafen cop Hans Jürgen Ladinek, a man who has made investigating the crimes of neo-Nazis his professional raison d'être; and we also meet Nigar Ergeldi, a Turkish grocer and longtime resident of the Federal Republic, whose intense aspirations for financial success are suddenly thwarted when his store is torched. Then there is the cool East German poet Sascha Anderson, who doubles as a Stasi agent and, following the wide-scale uncovering of Stasi files, finds himself ensnared in an ugly public debate with the acerbic—former East German and now longtime West German—folksinger Wolf Biermann.

In her title essay, Kramer presents us with Lea Rosh. Known for her telegenic skills as a Berlin talk-show hostess, and "famous in Germany for self-invention," Rosh launched a fund-raising campaign in 1987 to build a Holocaust memorial in Berlin. Though she has been criticized for being a part of Germany's "Shoah business" (an American Jewish pun that the journalist Henryk Broder introduced to Germany in 1993 in an article in *Der Spiegel* on the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington), the "partly Jewish" Rosh has promoted her Holocaust-memorial project with unrelenting energy. According to Kramer, Rosh "has taken up identification with Jewishness as a German duty." This may explain her intense, almost pathological, commitment to the memorial.

Rosh's project, as she envisioned it, was to be big, prominent, unavoidable, essential to the remembering of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Since Rosh first articulated her plan (what one commentator rather harshly called "German 'solutions' to the Final Solution"), it has been met with deep criticism, predictable shock and the usual ambivalence. Jewish Berliners—who live in Berlin, as one of Kramer's friends explains, because "Berlin is the only place where you can live out fully your Holocaust neurosis"—and gentile Berliners alike have expressed dismay over Rosh's project. And the debate over the memorial, which has involved German politicians, history professors, public intellectuals and Israeli, German and American artists and architects, has not yet come to an end.

The French historian Pierre Nora once remarked that "we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left." In the New Germany, however, there is a memory boom. "Since the 1980s Germany has engaged in a memory mania of monumental proportions," asserts Andreas Huyssen, adding that today "there are several hundred plans in the works for Holocaust monuments or memorial sites all over Germany." The memory of Auschwitz, in a symbolic sense, has become central to a united German identity. The trauma of the Holocaust, as a German Jewish writer recently wrote, has become the "mother of a finally discovered German national consciousness."

Thus the "politics of memory," which for Kramer may be the most loaded politics in the new, united German state, have made the Holocaust central to German self-understanding. Germans, she claims, are acutely preoccupied with their Germanness. She finds a "peculiarly German obsession with identity that the natives tend to regard as the highest expression of their *Innerlichkeit*," their innerness or inwardness, which Kramer in turn regards as "the most overused, overvalued, and wantonly exculpatory word in the German language."

> Germans talk about themselves. They talk about their pursuit of "Germanness" and their brooding interest in what being German means. They talk about *Innerlichkeit*. They say they want to find the space in their heads, the appropriate "innerness," where the German soul is located—where Germany is located—and in the end that space is so compelling that they tend to see it everywhere, to regard the world around them as a natural correlative of themselves.... They talk about that space in their heads, with *its* borders, the way Helmut Kohl talked a couple months ago about reviewing the status of the German-Polish border—as if the frustrations of a deepening, expanding, incorporating identity were their appropriate condition, the condition of being German.

Kramer is wrong about this. Germans are not searching quite so obsessively for *Innerlichkeit*. Indeed, the obsessiveness that Kramer attributes to Germans is, in fact, her own.

In Kramer's account, the New Germany is populated largely by unapologetic, nationalistic and self-confident people, and she finds something peculiarly German about these unattractive qualities. What's more, there is something essentially different about "the condition of being German," something that separates Germans from other Europeans and, of course, from Americans as well. In her discussion of the "German" problem of skinhead violence, Kramer rightly observes that in the south of France, the National Front receives up to 30 percent of the vote, and in parts of northern England violence against foreigners is a regular occurrence. But then she feels compelled to ask, "how 'German' is the German version"—a question that she is perfectly prepared to answer.

The Germanness of skinhead violence is necessarily, for the sake of Kramer's argument, distinct from its European counterparts. In fact, German support for right-wing extremist parties is less than in other European nations. But Kramer insists that there is something particularly odious about the German right. She claims, for example, that in 1991-92, when the surge in anti-

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foreigner violence reached unprecedented heights, "Germany suddenly looked like 'Germany' to the rest of the world." There is almost a sensation of *Schadenfreude* in Kramer's observations on the goose-stepping Germans doing what they do best. The widespread German protests against violence, and the public appearance of former President Richard von Weizsacker as the official "good German," don't count for much in Kramer's simplifying account.

By way of an interview with a Frankfurt business lawyer named Manfred Schiedermair, Kramer suggests that underneath the guise of democracy in the West and of anti-fascist communism in the East, there always remained the subterranean fantasies of the "old Germany." She seems to suspect that the new German world is "not very safe in its shiny new institutions and commitments," that the "old Germany" can reappear at any time.

> In the end, it doesn't matter if you trace those fantasies to Heine or Hitler, to the Black Forest or the blond pigtail. *Blut und Boden*—Blood and Soil—is not about jobs or public housing or food coupons. It is in the language, in the poetry, in the images of Germany received in childhood. It has to do with a kind of ethnic exaltation, located in race and place. It runs through the German canon from *Parzifal* to the fascist popular poets like Agnes Miegel, who were kept in the schoolbooks long after the war was over (while Bertolt Brecht was still excluded), to the playwright Botho Strauss, who has been publishing polemics on the collapse of "German" values of the sort that used to inspire Germans to give their lives for "identity."

The historical sloppiness of such pronouncements by Kramer, their stubborn desire to paint German history as a continuum leading from the Middle Ages through Hitler to today, enables her to reduce much of what has occurred in Germany in the post-*Wende* period to a simple extension of its tainted past.

Consider her essay on former West Berlin's *Autonomen*, the radical anarchist squatters, who singlehandedly destroyed a new restaurant on their turf. On Christmas 1985, Hartmut and Brigitte Bitomsky, two of the many '68-ers living in pre-*Wende* West Berlin, opened a restaurant called Maxwell; the restaurant was located in a part of Kreuzberg, a district populated mainly with punks, Turks, artists and intellectuals, that Brigitte considered one of "freest corners of the freest city in the world." Maxwell flourished, it got good write-ups in Berlin's newspapers and magazines, it made a name for itself. Until one day, in July 1988, when the *Autonomen* launched what they call a "*Kübelaktion*," a violent, even "fascist action" in which they ransacked the place, bringing about the restaurant's demise.

In the story of the destruction of Maxwell, where "people watched and did nothing," Kramer sees "signs of the new Germany" which is nothing but the "Old Germany." She uncovers "a story about a new fascism, about the first stirrings of that fascism, in people whom we would now call skinheads but who were posing then, even to themselves, as something radical and revolutionary and free."

Even the East German demonstrators of 1989, the brave souls who protested for freedom, are considered suspect by Kramer. They are, in her words, "just Germans following orders to be free." To this, she adds: "There were no Václav Havels or Andrei Sakharovs in East Germany." In her criticism of the former residents of the GDR, she claims that "most East Germans were edgy, acquiescent, and bewildered people" and were "to a large extent without community." This is way off the mark. If there is anything that the East Germans had, it was community. The recurrent nostalgia for the GDR among former East Germans, enigmatically called *Ostalgie*, is informed by the conviction that there was indeed a *Gemeinschaft*. Writers from the former East Germany have discussed this extensively in their recent work. Holger Teschke, the dramaturg of the Berliner Ensemble, recently observed that East Germans often had the feeling of community in spite of oppressive conditions; there was always a "captive audience," in the largest sense of the term.

Heavily reliant on a small pool of native informants, Kramer's glosses on Germany and the Germans—some genuine insights notwithstanding—fail to move beyond the limitations of their narrative. The story that she relates is one of continuity without significant differentiation. It does little to evoke the deeper complexities of German history since 1989.

If, as Kramer suggests, the story of the New Germany is to be taken as one of dark and haunting continuity, then it is no surprise that her judgment—her indictment—of the New Germany occasionally reads like certain cautionary tracts of the 1940s (such as *Is Germany Incurable?*, *What to Do with Germany* and *Germany: To Be or Not to Be*). Like those works, Kramer's book presumes a German national character, and a peculiarity of this character. "Germany's particular hell," she writes, "is that for Germans reinventing Germany, looking for Ger-

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many, asking themselves how German is it, the past is undeniably as German as it gets." If German history has traveled its own special course, then the peculiarity of its history is just about all that is necessary to explain the present.

But what is the lesson that we are to discern from such an essentialist approach to German history? That the German people, Westerners and Easterners, have changed little in the fifty years since the end of the war? Are the New Germans no different from the Old Germans? Of course, there is reason to be spooked by the course of German history. The point is that the Germans themselves are spooked by it. They have themselves confronted their past. They are riveted, and chilled, by what they remember and what they have been taught. The reason for their alarm and their vigilance is obvious. But the reason for Kramer's obsession with the German past, for her own politics of memory, is not nearly so easy to dignify. A startling sentence appears at the end of the introduction to her book. After explaining her commitment to reporting on Germany and the difficulties that this assignment entails, she concludes that "all this, of course, is what makes Germany irresistible to writers: Germany is where you get to address the Big Issues; Germany is where you get to talk about good and evil, and your story runs."

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Southern Discomfort

BY SVEN BIRKERTS

High Lonesome by Barry Hannah

(Atlantic Monthly Press, 230 pp., $22)

Barry Hannah writes the most consistently interesting sentences of any writer in America today. This is the first thing to say about him, and also, on a different, more abstract level, the last. When we first encounter the prose, certainly the prose of *High Lonesome*, his most recent collection of stories, we are struck by what might be called the physics of the presentation—the diction, syntax, figurative impulse, all those elements that mysteriously converge in a writer's voice. Subsequently, we grasp that here is something like a metaphysics as well: a metaphysics of the sentence. Such an idea confers importance on the often nonsensical sequiturs of Gertrude Stein or what can appear to be the primer cadences of Ernest Hemingway. A realized literary style not only reflects the writer's understanding of the relation of language to experience, but enacts that relation in the susceptible soul of the reader.

Hannah has been one of the prolific masters of the short story for several decades, and he has written several novels, such as *Geronimo Rex* and *Ray*. But we should not therefore conclude that he is a writer of strong narrative gifts. He is not. Hannah's successes in the novel and short story have been scored in spite of narrative, not because of it. His interest—his gift—is, start to finish, in writing the music of the unsettled, the disrupted, the damaged self in its encounters with the hard world. His characters, mostly men, appear in their relentless recurrence of type to be proxy selves.

Or poxy selves. They are writers, musicians, refuseniks of the small-town game plan; they are failures, drinkers, ranters, seducers and abandoners. The Hannah character abjectly—in shame or in dread—prowls the margins of some urban center; or, much more likely, has returned to his South, to a town like Hannah's own Oxford, Mississippi, there to live in tentacular entanglement with a reproachful wife, or within shouting distance of an embittered ex. He is generally unhappy, though easily capable of exalted interior flights; he is preternaturally sensitive to the insults still delivered everywhere to black people, yet he has in his diction something of the good ol' boy. He wrestles with sexual uncertainty—a homocrotic tropism is felt throughout Hannah's work—but he can hurl himself with rapacious eagerness at any woman. For all this, the tensions in this work do not derive from situation or conflict between characters, but from the fierce warring within the sensibilities of the protagonists or first-person narrators. Through mysterious verbal agency, this warring expresses itself partly as lyric drive.

High Lonesome collects thirteen stories, a handful of them of startling unexpectedness, with moods and interior storms that cannot be found anywhere else in fiction; another handful, alas, are thin, flashing with insight and invective, but lacking that catalytic eventfulness that carries elusive psychological transactions through to completion.

But about those sentences. I often feel that if I could "get" what it is that happens, really happens, in one of Hannah's paragraphs, I would hold in my hand the key to everything else in his work. Here is the first passage of his story "Drummer Down":

> He had never liked the young dancing Astaire, all greedy and certain. But now he was watching an old ghost thriller, and he liked Astaire old, pasted against the wall of mortality—dry, scared, maybe faintly alcoholic. This was a man. He pitied him. Everything good had pity in it, it seemed to Smith, now fifty and a man of some modest fashion himself. Even as a drunkard he had been a bit of a dandy. It was midnight when he turned off the set. He had begun thinking sadly about his friend Drum again, the man whose clothes were a crying shame. Drum two summers ago had exchanged his .22 for a pistol of a large bore, one that was efficient. In his bathtub in a trailer home on the outskirts of that large town in Alabama, he had put the barrel in his mouth.

The story then winds back to recount the beginnings of the friendship—Drum's kindness to Smith when Smith, his writing instructor, was going through an alcoholic collapse—and moves chronologically forward in fits and starts, but enough so that we see a basic reversal of fortunes, with Smith finding his legs again, while Drum ages into heart failure, finally electing suicide to preempt inevitable horrors.

But such a summary accounts for very little. The life of the story is kindled up line by line, in what is asserted, and how, but no less important, in the leap from sentence to sentence, in the ghostly sense suggested by the various eloquent gaps. The opening, which is as typical as any Hannah passage is likely to be, coordinates a number of delicate stylistic moves. Note the oblique precision of the first three sentences: Astaire pinpointed as a kind of correlative, the startling change in the dancer from early to late, and then the narrator's telling enumeration of qualities, with greediness and certainty linked in disapproving opposition to fear and alcoholism. Encouraged by an intended complexity, we can read more deeply, gathering surmises. That Smith is masochistic, for instance, easily quickened by failure—in others, and in himself as well. Certainly he is alert to

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the merest existential tremors, and a bit of a philosopher. "Everything good had pity in it," he asserts, ramping up from TV movie to moral observation in the space of a few lines. And this tells us much about the man's true disposition, the structure of his soul.

We might also take a moment to appraise the confident velocity of the telling, the swerves from the base-line time, the "now" of watching an old thriller on TV to the general "now" of Smith's time of life ("now fifty and a man of some fashion himself"), to the past ("Even as a drunkard"), to the present ("It was midnight"), to the indeterminate ("He had begun thinking") and finally to the past of his friend's suicide ("Drum two summers ago"). Yet we never feel that Hannah is trying to confuse or dizzy us; he is simply modeling the morose, mercurial inwardness of Smith, giving us a largely subliminal first impression of the man who will in the next pages explore his exigencies and those of his dead friend.

Hannah then plunges us fully into the hectic and alcoholically preposterous past. We see Smith, Drum and the two female students who join them to make a dubious entourage. "What can we do, Paul?" asks Drum, when Smith has stalled their writing class.

> "We could drink," said Smith, dying for a taste. He was imagining a long telescope of whiskey and soda through which to view these newcomers to his pain. He liked people waving like liquid images, hands reaching toward him.

Drum is rendered thus:

> He wore unironed clothes, things deeply cheap, dead and lumpy even off the rack at bargain barns, and the color of harmful chemicals, underneath them sneakers with Velcro snaps instead of shoe strings. The clothes of folks from a broken mobile home, as a pal of Smith's had described them. Drum at fifty-six lived upstairs in a small frame house of asbestos siding. In the lower story lived his mother, whom he called the Cobra. The brand of his smokes was Filter Cigarettes. His beer was white cans labeled Beer.

The veins of pathos and humor are wound one around the other until it becomes hard to tell which is which.

Soon, drunk, trumpeting a heartbreaking exuberance—certainly for one his age—Drum exclaims: "I am looking for accidental successes. I want to slip down and fall into something wonderful." Here is the reckless drinker's compact, his pledge to grace as an agency of rescue. But the words also capture the reader's sense of what it is that Hannah, as a writer, is about.

The "something wonderful" varies from story to story. It can be a place of fond and exaggerated retrospection, as in "A Creature of the Bay of St. Louis," where the narrator recalls how as a boy he nearly landed something never before seen by human eyes:

> I was sorely terrified but was pulled even past this and could do nothing, now up to my chin and the stiff little pole bent violently double. I was dragged through the mud and I knew the being when it surfaced would be bigger than me and with much more muscle. Then, like something underwater since Europe, seven or eight huge porpoises surfaced, blowing water in a loud group explosion out of their enormous heads, and I was just shot all over with light and nerves because they were only twenty feet from me ...

Or the almost painfully yearning but comic atmosphere of "Uncle High Lonesome," which conjures up the prototype of all Hannah's dreamers—a man with great life in his heart, with great energy and sensitivity, who cannot, for whatever reason, fit himself into any place that does not break like a loose ledge beneath him. It is the young nephew who tries to piece together the oddly sorted parts of the man's character:

> Uncle Peter was a binge drinker. Still, I blamed my aunt, a fastidious and abrasive country woman with a previous marriage. It was a tragedy she could give him no children and I had to stand in as his line in the family. She blundered here and there, saying wrong and hurtful things, a hag of unnecessary truth at family gatherings—a comment about somebody's weight, somebody's hair, somebody's lack of backbone. She was always correcting and scolding when I visited and seemed to think this was the only conversation possible between the old and the young, and would have been baffled, I think, had you mentioned it as an unbearable lifetime habit. I blamed her for his drinking and his insensitivity to blacks. He was doing it to show off to her, that's what. He was drinking because he could not stand being cruel.

There are also, in this collection, more ambitious, and, in their associative construction, more obscure stories, such as "Get Some Young," which plays out the tormented sexual ambiguities between husband, wife and stranger, with an edginess reminiscent of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, or the sharp-eyed and melancholy tale of marital infidelity "Two Gone Over," which will convince any reader new to Hannah that this is a writer who knows in his bones the American sadness that crouches behind every smiling billboard, infiltrates every optimistically named suburban development and infects like caries the brightest cheerleader smile:

> All over America from shore to shore such lovely women as this marry too soon because somebody wants them too much. They are wanted so much they can't deny the hunger. The loves are too hungry and quick, the men fall on them and ravish them and use up the love almost instantly. They must eat every part. Then nothing is left, only two husks with their manners and they are just sitting there together glum and naked in the hats of their choice, not another word to say, not a drop left to give. Nature is through with them for a long while, and they begin friction over nothing, except that each feels cheated, always cheated, cheated every minute. Somebody once told me, as a thought in consolation, when you see a beautiful woman, always remember: Somebody is tired of her.

There is a metaphysics here, a way of seeing things that combines ardor and sadness, and then peers behind them with a pitiless truth-requiring eye. Hannah is forever setting innocence and experience up against each other—no contest, of course—but in a way that never belittles the dear faith of the former. It amounts to something profound, and of a lyrical writer we cannot demand more.

SVEN BIRKERTS has recently edited *Tolstoy's Dictaphone: Technology and the Muse* (Graywolf Press).

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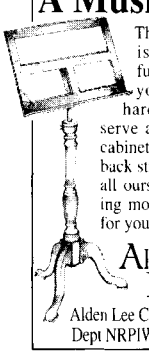
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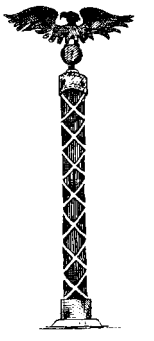
WASHINGTON DIARIST

A bridge too far

THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT IS not quite glory, but it has carried Bill Clinton a long way, all the way to posterity. I was not surprised that the Sunday papers were giving the president the benefit of the doubt, as 49.20 percent of 48.99 percent of the electorate had done a few months earlier. The sentimentality of America will not be thwarted. When the bunting is hung and the Bible is ready, we are a country of Cronkites. Still, I was a little startled by this sentence in *The New York Times*: "Ms. Estrich, who was raped more than 20 years ago, says that Mr. Clinton is not the type." In the history of praising faintly, this will live forever. I was not aware that anybody had accused Bill Clinton of being that "type," and it was discouraging to have the discussion of sex and power returned to the days of Susan Brownmiller. Still, it was the weekend of the inauguration, and only a cynic would refuse to believe the best about the president. So I headed for the Mall.

FOR THE HOLOCAUST MUSEUM, actually. It, too, had been made into a venue. It was building its bridge to the twenty-first century by presenting what its chairperson described as "a select group of profound Americans." (It might have been worse, I thought—a small exhibition, say, called "Four More Years: The Holocaust in 1941.") The first of the profound Americans was Cornel West, who allowed that "when I first heard the idea of the Holocaust museum, I was not persuaded," but then thanked the museum's director, "brother Walter," for changing his mind. West spoke for twenty vacant and self-congratulatory minutes. "I begin," he announced, "with a wonderful quote from the great Theodor Adorno," who was promptly followed by Hardy, Melville, Hawthorne, James, Pascal, Ellison, Faulkner, Twain, O'Neill, Morrison, Kafka, Chekhov, Pynchon, Fitzgerald, William Carlos Williams, Tennessee Williams, Hansberry, Tocqueville, Wilde and Beckett. Oh, and Earth, Wind and Fire. The conspicuously prosperous professor thundered against "comfort and convenience" and "the quest for liquidity" and "material toys." He had not voted for the president, he said, but he had voted, because "as a radical democrat I believe in the rotation of elites." The crowd thought that this was a joke and laughed. He exhorted them to "make life worth living." And they rose to their feet when he told them not to despair, since "I'll be there with you, 'cause I'm goin' down fightin'!" The prospect of Cornel West making the ultimate sacrifice was unbearably moving. I had never heard West speak before, and had been admonished for basing my skepticism about him entirely on what he had written. But there he was, swooping down and rising up, rasping and whispering and snarling and hissing and chuckling and honking, in a burlesque of Negro homiletics. I stand with the brother: we must pursue justice. But the brother is not a preacher, he is a character actor. It is not enough to talk like a preacher. You have to have something to preach.



THIS LESSON STOOD ME IN good stead the next day, for the president's speech. The weekend's rap on Bill Clinton was that the election of 1996 had promoted him from politics to history, and his second inaugural address was to have provided the proof of his new elevation. This was not a photo-op, it was a Clio-op. Alas, it was just another exercise in generic uplift. The president's words were benevolent, conscientious, sincere and almost completely contentless. I say almost, because an evolution seems to have taken place in Clinton's thinking, at least for the purpose of this address. A lackluster meliorism has given way to a lackluster utopianism. Targeted cuts have been replaced by a stab at perfectibility. Some of Clinton's utopianism is scientistic. The president is a cybermillenarian. He appears to believe that the moral, social and cultural advances of "the Information Age" will be commensurate with its technological advances, and attributable largely to them. (I did not expect "the Almighty has his own purposes," but this was an inaugural address that included the words "the Internet.") Myself, I have no doubt about the indifference of the computer to good and evil. This technology, like all technology, will lend efficiency to our ends, but it will make the devising of those ends no easier.

IT IS IN "THE INFORMATION AGE," after all, that we are witnessing the greatest offense to American idealism since slavery, and that is the degradation of life in the inner city. All the software in the world will not explain, or reverse, this human collapse. Words will defeat illiterate children on the screen as on the page, and junkies will not exchange their pleasures for information. We have not been "touched by tragedy," as the president said. We have been overrun by it. For this reason, the president's little prophecy of arcadia in America is precisely what the country does not need to hear. "The promise we sought in a new land," he began, in the afternoon's Sorensenism, "we will find again in a land of new promise." And he gave the particulars: "In this new land, education will be every citizen's most prized possession." And "the knowledge and power of the Information Age will be within reach not just to the few, but of [sic] every classroom, every library, every child." And "parents and children will have time not only to work but to read and play together." And "our streets will echo again with the laughter of our children because no one will try to shoot them or sell them drugs anymore." And "everyone who can work will work, with today's permanent underclass part of tomorrow's growing middle class." Oh, the fullness! But hold on. This is not only an inspiration, it is also an illusion. When we get to the other side of that bridge to the twenty-first century, it is certain that somebody will try to shoot our children and sell them drugs; and the somebody might even be a child. Millenarians should choose their words carefully when the millennium is nigh. This is no time for good feeling. And it is not a counsel of despair to say so.

AFTER THE PRESIDENT SPOKE, A choir from Arkansas sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," and something remarkable occurred. They changed the words. "As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free," was what Julia Ward Howe wrote. It was a sublime statement of the American religion. It codified a revolutionary equivalence between holiness and freedom, and it sacralized the ultimate sacrifice for the one as for the other. But the choir at the Capitol made an improvement. In an apotheosis of Clintonism, they sang: "As he died to make men holy, let us live to make men free." Get it? No darkness, no difficulty, no death; only the cool stuff. I don't believe, of course, that we will die to make men free. (I don't believe, for that matter, that he died to make men holy.) In our day, the greatest courage is not the courage that will be asked of most Americans. But some courage will surely be asked of them. The president is selling hope when he should be selling courage, which is hope toughened, hope disabused.

LEON WIESELTIER

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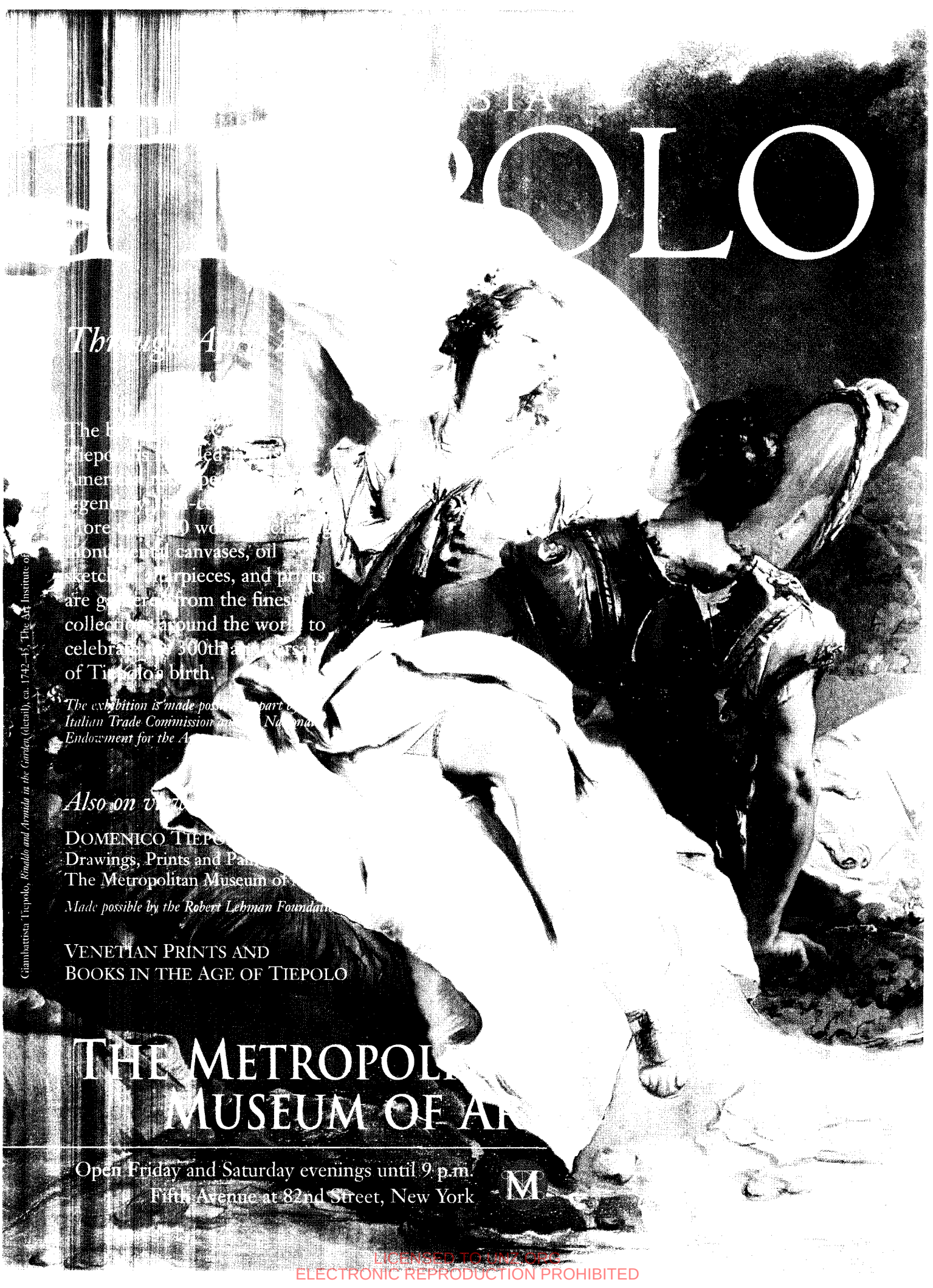

Giambattista Tiepolo, *Rinaldo and Armida in the Garden* (detail), ca. 1742–45. The Art Institute of

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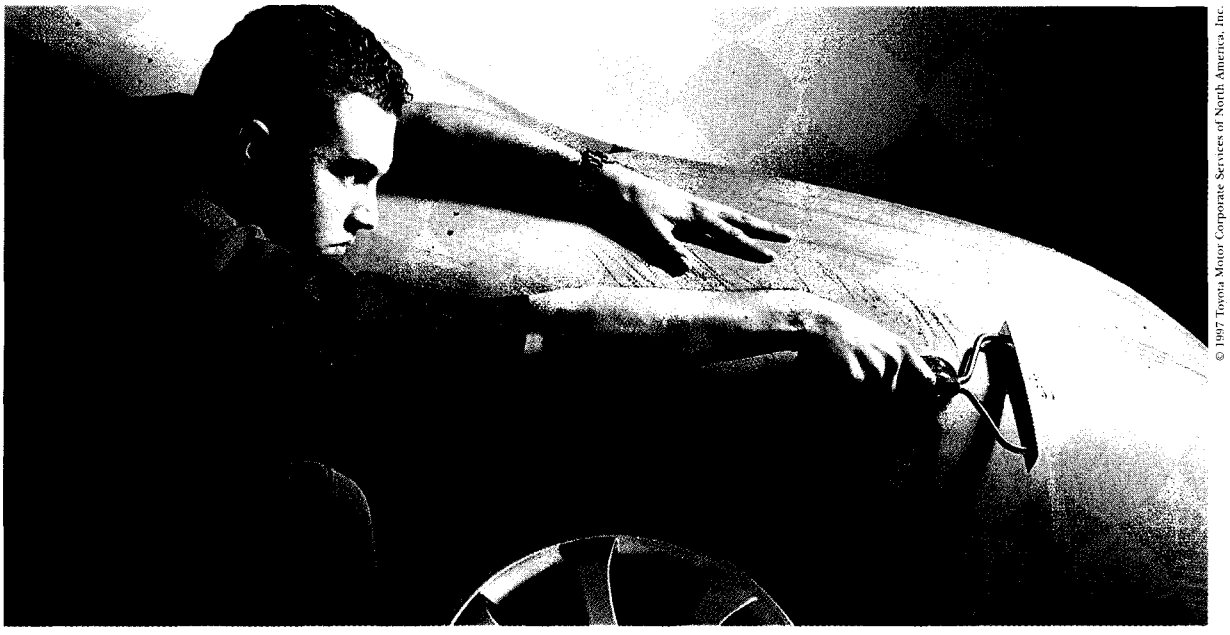
You may be surprised AT WHERE THE SHAPE of things to come IS COMING FROM.



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